

MOBILIZING CANTONESE SPEAKING YOUNG ADULTS INTO MISSIONAL DISCIPLES IN A  
NORTH AMERICAN ATTRACTIONAL CHINESE IMMIGRANT CHURCH BY STORIES IN  
GATHERED AND SCATTERED WORSHIP

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To Jennifer,  
my amazing wife, companion and cheerleader,  
whose sacrificial care for me and our children, Jocelyn and Jasmine,  
made it possible for me to complete this thesis.

Missions Exists Because Worship Doesn't. — John Piper

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ACEM	Association of Christian Evangelical Ministries
CTB	Called to B.L.E.S.S.
RHCCC	Richmond Hill Christian Community Church
TSS	Transformation Sweet Spot

## ABSTRACT

Worship empowers discipleship through hearing, sharing, and remembering God's Story, and encourages discipleship as God's Story and our stories combine to lead seekers and Christ followers alike to the deeper worship of God. In other words, worship is the alpha and omega of discipleship. Storytelling is the vital component in both worship and discipleship. Worship re-tells God's Story. Discipleship is primarily relational and stories communicate, engage and relate to one another. Therefore, storytelling is the most effective and powerful tool of discipleship to vividly demonstrate the essence of the Kingdom of God in the post-modern generation.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

#### **Introduction**

In the latter half of the twentieth century, many people from Hong Kong immigrated to Toronto, Ontario, Canada. They were looking for assistance to settle down in an entirely new environment. Moreover, some immigrant Christians were looking for a new spiritual home in their adopted country. Many Cantonese speaking Chinese churches were founded by missionaries from Hong Kong to reach out to the new immigrants. As a result, Chinese churches in Toronto have enjoyed great success and experienced rapid growth in numbers.

Outreach strategies to reach a large number of audiences like large evangelistic events, seeker-sensitive worship services and ministries that addressed the needs of immigrants were very effective. Intentional outreach and engagement with the community and neighborhood was not a high priority because these Chinese churches were already busy enough with the huge influx of Christians and non-Christians.

The immigrant influx from Hong Kong slowed significantly in the twenty-first century. Thus, the traditional outreach strategies used by Cantonese congregation of Chinese immigrant churches are not as effective as before. Also, those strategies are not widely adopted by the younger generations because they value “belonging” more than persuading people to “believe,” and are focused on large and less intimate evangelistic meetings. The question is how to disciple the next generation of Cantonese

young adults in Chinese immigrant churches, responding to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ, in the changing cultural landscape of Toronto?

This chapter includes five sections. The first section describes the problem facing churches using the attractional model to reach twenty-first century North America. The second section states the hypothesis about how to address the problem of transforming an attractional church to respond to the Great Commission more effectively. The third section discusses how the problem and hypothesis are relevant to Richmond Hill Christian Community Church, a Chinese ethnic church planted 35 years ago in Toronto – over 90% of the members are of Chinese descent and over 75% are immigrants. The fourth section briefly describes the project and how it will test the hypothesis. The last section of this chapter explains how the remaining chapters of this thesis-project will advance the central argument.

### **The Problem**

Throughout the history of the Church, faithful followers of Christ have obeyed the commission of Jesus Christ to “Go and make disciples.” Followers of Jesus in all generations have tried to share the good news of Jesus Christ “...to the very end of this world.” They tried different methods of engaging the world and the culture in order to spread the gospel. The key problem is how do followers of Jesus reach out to the communities where most of them have little or no knowledge about Christianity?

Since Lesslie Newbigin published his famous works of *Foolishness to the Greeks* and *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* in the 1980s, leaders of churches in the post-

Christendom world have wrestled with the definitions, meanings, and interrelationships of the church, mission, gospel, and culture.<sup>1</sup> We need to find a way to communicate and open up conversation with people who are living in a culture where the local churches are no longer the center of their lives. Therefore, church leaders are trying to look into these intertwining relationships from different perspectives and angles. Some are starting the discussions from the definitions, roles, and functions of the church and how they relate to gospel and mission with the cultures. Some are starting from the nature of the gospel and how it relates to the mission of the church, and the different understandings the gospel from different cultures. Some are starting from the Mission of God (*Missio Dei*) to define the mission of the church – how the gospel will restore the original plan of God in this pluralistic world. Some are looking first to the culture to see how churches can fulfill the Mission of God.

As church leaders explore their options, we can very easily fall into the trap of asking church questions as Alan Roxburgh confessed in his book *Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood*, Roxburgh tried to engage in a dialogue among the gospel, the church and the culture in his days in Gospel and Our Culture Network (GOCN). He ended up spending most of the time on church questions.<sup>2</sup> We are tempted to try to find bulletproof methods for Christians to communicate the gospel more effectively, to engage the cultures, and for churches to become more relevant to this post-modern

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<sup>1</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986); Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989).

<sup>2</sup> Alan J. Roxburgh, *Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), 53.

society. Churches are spending much time wrestling with these questions, but often reducing “mission” to a mere statement, “church” to programs and structures, “gospel” to a set of instructions asking people to make a decision for Christ, and “culture” to objectify people so that the sole aim is to bring them into the churches.

In the last few decades, ministry designed around an attractional model dominated many of the larger churches in North America. Attractional churches aim to “attract” people to programs, events and seeker sensitive worship services inside the church community. Their goal is to convert non-believers to become faithful disciples of Jesus Christ through these programs and events.

In his book *The Purpose Driven Church*, Rick Warren emphasized that the only focus of his congregation, Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, CA, is to implement the purposes of God through a four-step process: bring the people in as members, train them well to ministry, build them up to maturity, and send them out for mission.<sup>3</sup> This model works well when the people in the communities have some knowledge or experience of Christianity. The worship services re-engage them with the faith through familiar music and media. This model also works well if the communities being reached have significant needs. Attractional churches will usually only attract people with similar backgrounds, social status, or ethnic heritage. Alan Hirsch points out that,

The attractional model only works where no significant cultural shift is required when moving from outside to inside the church. And as Western culture has become increasingly post-Christian, the attractional model has lost its effectiveness. The process of

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<sup>3</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose-Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), xx.

extracting people from the culture and assimilating them into the church diminishes their ability to speak to those outside.<sup>4</sup>

Attractional churches can unintentionally encourage religious consumerism by spending their resources to make their programs and events more attractive. These programs and events are often expensive compared with training disciples who simply focus on reproducing disciples. People who accept Jesus Christ because their felt needs were met will probably continue to expect churches to address their needs in many ways. As a result, church leaders continue to spend their time and energy enhancing and expanding programs to meet those unceasing needs.

Attendance at these churches does not necessarily reflect the effectiveness of disciple making. In 2004, Willow Creek Community Church in suburban Chicago, IL, opened a new state-of-the-art auditorium style worship center with an official capacity over 7,000.<sup>5</sup> More than 25,000 people worship at one of seven Willow Creek regional campuses each weekend as of January 2017.<sup>6</sup> The same year the worship center opened, Willow Creek conducted a church-wide survey on spiritual growth. One of the shocking findings is that increased participation in church activities barely moved people to love God and love others more.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Alan Hirsch, "Defining Missional," *Christianity Today*, accessed March 26, 2016, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/2008/fall/17.20.html?start=2>.

<sup>5</sup> Wikipedia (Wikimedia Foundation, 2016), s.v. "Willow Creek community church - Worship Center" accessed March 11, 2016, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Willow\\_Creek\\_Community\\_Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Willow_Creek_Community_Church).

<sup>6</sup> "The History of Willow Creek Community Church," Willow Creek Community Church, 2016, accessed January 9, 2017, <http://www.willowcreek.org/en/about/history>.

<sup>7</sup> Greg L. Hawkins and Cally Parkinson, *Move: What 1,000 Churches Reveal About Spiritual Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 17.



While attracting people to come to church is not a bad idea by itself, the problem is how to mobilize people in attractional churches beyond a focus on their needs to live missionally in all spheres of their lives, demonstrating the kingdom of God to the people around them. As Alan Hirsch rightly points out, “The people of a missionary God ought to engage the world the same way he did—by *going* out rather than just *reaching* out.”<sup>8</sup>

### **The Hypothesis**

The key factor in mobilizing people to live missionally, demonstrating kingdom living, is motivational, not methodological. People lack life transformation, not training. Their hearts must be transformed to live for God. For this transformation to happen, churches should encourage people of God to focus on God through worship and prayer as well as discovering what God is doing in their lives.

The hypothesis of the thesis-project is that worship empowers discipleship through hearing, sharing, and remembering God’s Story, and encourages discipleship as God’s Story and our stories combine to lead seekers and Christ followers alike to the deeper worship of God. In other words, worship is the alpha and omega of discipleship. Since transformation is from God, and our willingness to be transformed is because of the love of Jesus Christ, the beginning of transformation and renewal must be worship.

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<sup>8</sup> Hirsch, “Defining Missional.”

Robert Webber wrote, “The Church is first a worshipping community. Evangelism and other functions flow from the worship of the Church.”<sup>9</sup> The foremost importance of discipleship is to discover what God has done in our lives. Because of the blessings God has bestowed, disciples respond by living out God’s plan for us, sharing God’s Story, and sharing our stories with seekers and Christ followers alike, so as to bring all together in the worship of God. The primary function of worship as the gathered community is a response to the grace of God offered by His people. In worship, God’s people praise and thank God for all God has done. They are also empowered by God to glorify Him in the rest of their lives – the scattered community.

In worship, God once again speaks to His people through Word and Sacrament. He shows us His unceasing and covenantal love through the redemptive history He reveals in His Word. In worship, we see how our relationship with God is renewed and restored through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ on the Cross. At the Lord’s Supper, the story of Jesus’ sacrifice for our sin is re-enacted through the breaking of bread and the pouring of the cup. Scripture reading in worship offers an immediate experience of God as the power and effect of the passage that is read encounters our present experience and we apply it to our life.<sup>10</sup>

In worship, we experience the presence of God and know who He is through singing praises, giving thanks, prayers, Scripture reading, preaching and coming to the

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<sup>9</sup> Robert Webber, *Worship as a Verb* (Nashville, TN: Star Song Publishing Group, 1992), 7-8.

<sup>10</sup> Webber, *Worship*, 9.

Table. God calls us to respond – to live for Him daily, to glorify and worship Him – this is discipleship. Although worship empowers discipleship, the goal of worship is not discipleship but worship. Worship is the place where God is speaking to us and showing us who He is, and where we respond to all God shows us. Worship is the encountering moment that people can experience the grace and love of God through the re-telling of the redemptive events and redemptive living of the people of God. Conversion, transformation, and renewal could happen during worship, but the end goal of worship is worship. We exist to celebrate Christ and glorify Him.

While worship is primary, disciple-making and worship are inseparable. The ultimate goal of making disciples is to bring people to worship God with all of their heart, soul, mind, and will – all for His glory. As The Westminster Shorter Catechism says, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.”

Making disciples is not merely about spiritual formation through better prayer and devotional lives, practicing social justice, loving one another, and reaching the lost. These are all legitimate sub-goals for discipleship, but the ultimate goal is to bring people to God and worship Him. The focus of all spiritual disciplines and demonstration of the gospel is glorifying God. This thesis-project will argue that the best approach to disciple people is to worship God through stories.

The Bible is full of stories—from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22. Everything around us is built on stories. The Mission of God is the Story of God, from creation to the new creation. The Gospel is the story of the Son of God, Jesus Christ – His birth, His life and ministries on the earth, His crucifixion and death, His resurrection and ascension. The

Church is also a history of stories; how the Holy Spirit guides, sustains and empowers God's people to fulfill the God's mission. The culture is composed of the stories of individuals intertwined with one another. Christ followers who are making disciples have their life stories too. In God's grand redemptive plan, all stories interconnected, one with another, with meanings and purposes. Ultimately, all stories will make sense in light of God's Story – His grand narrative. The key to transformational discipleship is to connect God's Story, the stories of the Church, the stories of the disciples and the stories of the seekers and the communities.

Our primary task is to engage in conversations and stories from the different perspectives we find in Scripture. We should examine the whole counsel of Scripture, the whole Story of God, and review the whole rich stories, histories, and traditions of generations of churches led by the Holy Spirit; engaging the redemptive stories of the people of God in light of the gospel stories of Jesus Christ; interacting with the stories of individuals, believers or seekers to the redemptive history of God the Father, God the Son Jesus Christ and God the Holy Spirit. God's people can share God's Story by living out their stories among their neighbors and in their communities. At the same time, seekers can share their stories with the people of God. From the interactions, they will find their stories make sense in light of God's Story.

Discipleship is primarily relational. Jesus spent three years with the twelve disciples, teaching them, but also showing them how He lived and obeyed His Father. In this post-modern generation, the most efficient and powerful way to communicate and demonstrate the essence of the kingdom of God is through stories. Stories

communicate, engage and relate to one another. Stories do not intimidate others as everyone has the right to tell his or her stories. Stories attract attention, encourage participation and create community. The interaction of stories may be the catalyst to bring us closer to one another and closer to God.

### **The Ministry Setting**

Richmond Hill Christian Community Church (RHCCC) is a non-denominational congregation located in the suburbs of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. RHCCC is the second of thirteen churches in the church network called Association of Christian Evangelical Ministries (ACEM).<sup>11</sup> Most of these churches are Chinese ethnic congregations with people mainly from Hong Kong and mainland China. The first church of ACEM was planted in 1975 by Rev. John Kao, who was the missionary from Hong Kong sent by Christian Nationals' Evangelism Commission (CNEC).<sup>12</sup> The first worship service of RHCCC started in 1985 and only had a Cantonese speaking congregation. RHCCC is an evangelical, multi-lingual, seeker-sensitive and life-development church striving to be a "Church for the Unchurched & the Committed."<sup>13</sup> RHCCC is using Pastor Rick Warren's *the Purpose Driven Church* life-development model.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> About ACEM," ACEM, June 1, 2015, accessed April 18, 2016, [http://acem.ca/en/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=302&Itemid=70](http://acem.ca/en/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=302&Itemid=70).

<sup>12</sup> "About ACEM," ACEM.

<sup>13</sup> "RHCCC – Richmond Hill Christian Community Church," RHCCC, accessed April 18, 2016, <http://rhccc.ca/en>.

<sup>14</sup> Warren, *Purpose Driven Church*, 49.

RHCCC is a typical Chinese immigrant church in Toronto. The founding members of the congregation mainly came from Hong Kong and spoke Cantonese. It is one of the largest Chinese ethnic churches in North America and has four congregations. The total average weekly attendance of RHCCC is about 4,300 across six adult worship services speaking Cantonese, English, and Mandarin, two youth services speaking English, and three children services.

The largest adult congregation is Cantonese with an average weekly attendance of about 2,400 and three weekend worship services. The second largest adult congregation is English, comprised mostly of second generation Chinese immigrants. Average weekly worship attendance is about 600 with two worship services. The third adult congregation is Mandarin. Their members are mostly from mainland China. The average weekly worship attendance is about 550 with one worship service. The fourth congregation is Young Life Development congregation whose members are 0-17 years old. These are the children of the adult congregations. The average weekly worship attendance is about 750.

A huge immigrant influx from Hong Kong due to the political instability during the 1990s contributed to the rapid increase attendance of the Cantonese congregation. As immigrants moved into the new environment in Toronto, they were desperately seeking friends and community to help them settle down. As a seeker-sensitive, attractional church, RHCCC provided a large Chinese community in Toronto but also many services that addressed the needs of the immigrants.

Around the year 2000, the political situation stabilized in Hong Kong and the influx of immigrants stopped. Some of the people who came from Hong Kong in the 1990s chose to return as they found Toronto was not a desirable place for them. Those who stayed in Toronto had their friends and communities. The services provided by the immigrant churches no longer attracted them.

In the last thirty-five years, RHCCC has been very focused on outreach with large evangelistic events, seeker-sensitive worship services and different ministries to reach out to various target groups. Outreach through small groups and individuals has been taught and practiced but not celebrated regularly among members. Thus, the weekly worship attendance appeared to reach a plateau around 2,400 people in the last three years in Cantonese congregation. Moreover, the average age of the Cantonese congregation is increasing. Some early contributors in RHCCC are either retiring or slowing down in life and ministries. The situation will continue in the next few years.

An increasingly important topic among Chinese churches in Toronto is planning for the next generation as most of the senior pastors are planning to retire in the next few years. There have been many discussions about the future of Chinese churches in Toronto in next five to ten years. Would all congregations, namely Cantonese, Mandarin and English, be under the same roof with one leadership team and one direction, or would the congregations separate to have their own churches with different leadership and direction?

Almost all agree that the English congregation will be the fastest growing congregation in Chinese churches in Toronto. There is no consensus about the future

direction of Cantonese congregation due to the external factors. First, some young families from Hong Kong will continue to come to Canada because of the better education system which will encourage the development of young children. Second, political instability in Hong Kong has intensified in the last few years and might continue to worsen.

### Cantonese Speaking Young Adults in RHCCC

In 2016, there are about 150 young adults in the Cantonese congregation. Compared with RHCCC's 4,300 weekly average worship attendance; they account only 3.5 percent of the attendance. Of 150 of those Cantonese speaking young adults, 60 of those are the more mature young adults who have worked 5-10 years in the marketplace. They will be ready to be leaders of the church in next few years. Our research interest would be on those young adults. Most Chinese churches focus on the English speaking second generation, the children and young adults of the leaders. Cantonese young adults are often ignored and neglected when RHCCC plans for leadership development and succession. They are labeled as the 1.5 generation in the multi-cultural immigrant church. Many people defined the 1.5 generation differently, but this designation usually refers to people with this characteristic,

The term 1.5 generation or 1.5G refers to people who immigrate to a new country before or during their early teens. They earn the label the "1.5 generation" because they bring with them characteristics from their home country but continue their assimilation and socialization in the new country, thus being "halfway" between the 1st generation and the 2nd generation. Their identity is thus a combination of new and old culture and tradition, and they may thus experience a third culture. Sociologist Ruben Rumbaut was among the first to use the term to examine



outcomes among those arriving in the United States before adolescence.<sup>15</sup>

However, they will play a unique role in RHCCC's future. If the congregations decide to part ways, the Cantonese young adults will be the key leaders of the new Cantonese church. If all congregations stay together under one leadership team, the Cantonese young adults would act as a bridge between the first generation and the second generation. Collaboration between different congregations is the key for next generation leadership because there will be no one single senior pastor who can handle multiple congregations with different languages. English pastors cannot capture the essence of Cantonese and Mandarin congregations, while Chinese pastors cannot entirely understand the second generation English-speaking culture. Also, communal and collaborative leadership will be the approach for the future because shifts in media, philosophy, science and religion in our world are provoking a shift from the traditional hierarchal approach to leadership to a communal polycentric approach.<sup>16</sup>

However, there are challenges to discipling Cantonese speaking young adults in North American Chinese churches. From my own pastoral experience, young adults often seem to be discouraged. In Chinese culture, most parents would like their children to have a stable and reputable career with a bright future. Buying a home and getting married is what parents expect their young adult children to do. From a very

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<sup>15</sup> *Wikipedia* (Wikimedia Foundation, 2016), s.v. "Immigrant generations" accessed April 16, 2016, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immigrant\\_generations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immigrant_generations).

<sup>16</sup> J.R. Woodward, *Creating a Missional Culture: Equipping the Church for the Sake of the World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2013), 65, Kindle.

early age, many parents will push their children to study and learn in order to secure a better future. Chinese children have many extracurricular activities during the week such as piano, swimming, taekwondo and ice skating. Engaging with people and other cultures is rarely encouraged as the children are already busy enough.

When these children become young adults, graduate, and start to seek jobs, they find it is almost impossible to fulfill their parent's expectation to buy a home as the economic landscape in Toronto makes it very hard to land a stable job with bright future. Because of this, they doubt themselves. All the hard work and study did not give them a better prospect. Hence, they choose to focus on spending time and money for instant gratification as their future seems entirely out of their control. Also, it is observed that from my involvement in young adult ministries, they are afraid to make a commitment to anything. They seem disappointed and discouraged with their past efforts which yielded nothing.

For church life, they continue with a Chinese "doing" mentality. Spirituality in Chinese churches is typically defined by how much one can do for Christ. In the last ten years, outreach and discipleship strategies in RHCCC were highlighted by large scale events such as campaigns, Bible conferences, fundraising walkathons, evangelistic outreach events and concerts. Ministry success was defined by what happened inside the church property and how many people participated. Because of what they observe at church, compartmentalization of life into church, work, family and school is not uncommon for the young adults. Once they leave the church property, they show little noticeable differences from their unchurched peers.

Moreover, large evangelistic and discipleship events are not effective ways to disciple young adults. They prefer smaller group discipleship with more discussions, sharing, and interactions. They like relationships and dialogue more than monologue teaching. Therefore, to disciple young adults into mature followers of Jesus Christ, we need to transform from the “doing” culture inside the church property to “being” and “living” in all spheres of life.

The disciples of Jesus are called to live out our identity in Jesus Christ by proclaiming the gospel in words and deeds. The church needs to teach the young adults to proclaim the gospel in their everyday lives. The thesis of this project is that discipleship can be empowered through hearing, sharing, and remembering God’s Story, and that worship is central to that process. Discipleship is encouraged as God’s Story and our stories are intertwined to lead seekers and Christ followers alike to a deeper relationship with God. Gathered worship empowers scattered worship. Scattered worship leads people to gathered worship. When God’s people are “scattered” in the world, worship is accomplished through proclaiming and demonstrating the good news of Jesus Christ. That is missional living. The purpose of this thesis-project is encourage the young adults to understand their beings through God’s Story in them, living their stories in God’s grand narratives and proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ through God’s Story and their stories.

The first area we need to teach the young adults is their “being,” their identities and relationship with God. We need to show them that worship and prayer are of utmost importance, and high priorities for discipleship. In seeker-sensitive, attractional

churches like RHCCC, the worship service to some people is a place to enjoy the music and inspirational teaching from the pulpit. It is a consumer, “makes me feel good” attitude. However, we need to emphasize to the young adults that the worship service is a place to worship and encounter God. We worship God because of the blessings bestowed upon us. We encounter God through praise and worship because God’s grand narrative of creation, fall, redemption and restoration is once again revealed in front of us through the Word and Sacrament.

We need to teach the young adults that prayer is not just for petition, but for deepening their relationship with God. The relationship with God is the motivation for the young adults to live missionally to demonstrate the gospel. When we know God and His love for us more deeply, we respond by living our lives as worship and sacrifice. Furthermore, God’s specific mission for individuals will be revealed through prayer and discernment. We need to show young adults that the power to live missionally is from prayer.

The second area we need to teach the young adults is their “living.” We need to teach them ways to demonstrate the gospel in a daily setting; how to listen to the needs of the neighbors and serve them so that people will experience the love of Christ.

The third area we need to teach is proclamation. We understand the ultimate goal is to proclaim the gospel and the reign of God in this world. We need to equip the young adults to proclaim the Kingdom of God through sharing the Story of God, their salvation story and their daily encounter with God as the disciples of Jesus Christ.

The goal of this thesis-project is to mobilize the Cantonese speaking young adults; transforming them from attractional church parishioners to be missional disciples. Attractional church parishioners bring unchurched people to evangelistic events, ministry groups and seeker sensitive services, but missional disciples see themselves as blessed people of God, commissioned and empowered to go to their home, work, school and neighborhood and to live a life worthy of their calling from God.

### **Testing the Hypothesis**

In his book *Discover Your Mission Now*, Dave Ferguson proposes five missional practices for every Christian to change the world.<sup>17</sup> These form the B.L.E.S.S. strategy modeled by Jesus Christ to bless the people around Him. According to Ferguson, B.L.E.S.S. is an acronym:<sup>18</sup> Begin with prayer, Listen, Eat, Serve, and Story. With the author's written permission, this thesis-project will be based on this strategic framework with the adaptation of the original ideas and the contents in order to test the hypothesis.

The name of the project for RHCCC is called "Called to B.L.E.S.S.". The adaptation will be mostly on the "B – Begin with Prayer" and "S – Story" which are the foci of the thesis-project. "Called to B.L.E.S.S." will be presented in the form of a five-week learning journey with the weekly sermons focusing the themes from B.L.E.S.S. In

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<sup>17</sup> Dave Ferguson, *Discover Your Mission Now: 5 Simple Practices to Change Your World* (Chicago IL: Community Christian Church, 2012).

<sup>18</sup> Ferguson, *Discover Your Mission Now*, 28.

addition to the sermon series, a workbook will be written by our staff team providing all participants with individual devotional readings and small group discussion. The workbook will include weekly feature articles, daily devotions, and additional Bible studies.

The first week of the “Called to B.L.E.S.S.” will be **B**egin with Worship and Prayer with the additional emphasis on worship. The Last week will be **S**hare God’s Story and Our Stories with emphasis on discovering our stories in God and share to others. With the permission from Dallas Theological Seminary, the congregation will be asked to discover and discern what God has done in their lives by using material from “Community: Discovering Who We are Together.”<sup>19</sup> Through discovery and discernment, the congregation will know tremendous blessings from God. At the same time, they will learn to trust God even though they do not totally understand what is happening in their lives at the moment. Survey research and statistical analysis will be conducted before and after the “Called to B.L.E.S.S.” project to determine the impact of this journey on Cantonese speaking young people.

### **The Structure of the Thesis-Project**

The chapters in this thesis-project will attempt to illustrate why storytelling is crucial in worship and discipleship. Chapter Two explores Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians

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<sup>19</sup> Centre for Christian Leadership, *Community: Discovering Who We are Together* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2004).

through the lens of worship and missional living. Second, as the core of the discipleship is to discover who God is, worship Him and live for Him, we will examine the significance of using narratives in the Bible to praise and witness God and discover who God is. Third, we will examine the major traits and characteristics of disciples of Jesus Christ in the New Testament. This part of the study helps disciples know what kind of traits and stories they are looking for and how God may reveal Himself through stories and daily encounter with Him.

Chapter Three is a literature review. First, it will bring different authors' perspectives on worship as the beginning and the end of discipleship. Second, the literature review will be focused on the power of stories in gospel proclamation.

Chapter Four will discuss the project design of the "Called to B.L.E.S.S." journey and how the hypothesis will be tested. It will outline how and when the project was actually carried out as well as discussing the research methods used to gather data and what data was collected. It will also discuss the data gathered and how the data validate or invalidate the hypothesis.

Chapter Five will discuss the limitations of this thesis-project, the impact of ministries to young adults in Cantonese congregation in RHCCC and implications to similar ministries in North American immigrant churches.

I pray this thesis-project will help the young adults realize the blessings from God through discerning their stories in God's grand narrative so that they will be encouraged to worship God both gathered and scattered.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

#### **Introduction**

The focus of the thesis-project “Called to B.L.E.S.S.” journey is found in the first week – “Begin with Worship and Prayer” and in the fifth week – “Share God's Story and Our Stories.” This chapter will delve into the biblical and theological foundations of this thesis. First, we will look into the epistle to the Ephesians to see how Paul illustrates the relationship between worship, discipleship and missional living. Second, as the core of the discipleship is to discover who God is, worship Him and live for Him, we will examine the significance of using narratives in the Bible as well as the major traits of Jesus’ disciples in the New Testament.

#### **Worship and Missional Living According to Ephesians**

This section will explore the relationship between worship and missional living through the study of the epistle to the Ephesians and related passages. First, we will examine the background of Ephesus and the similarities between Ephesus and today’s pluralistic world. Second, we will study closely the epistle to the Ephesians with the emphasis on chapters One to Three to illustrate that knowing who God is, what God has done and who we are through worship and prayer empowers our discipleship and missional living.



## Background of Ephesus and its Implications to the Thesis

Ephesus once had an excellent harbor and was the one of the wealthiest commercial cities in the province of Asia. It was the center of worship of the goddess Artemis/Diana of Western Asia.<sup>1</sup> The Temple of Artemis, located in Ephesus, was one of the seven great wonders of the ancient world.<sup>2</sup> This temple was not only the center of worship but also intricately connected with the economic structure. Large deposits of money were stored in the Temple and Artemis also had her own financial estate, one of the largest in Asia.<sup>3</sup> The population of Ephesus in the Roman period is estimated at between 200,000 – 250,000 making it the third largest city in the Empire after Rome and Alexandria.<sup>4</sup>

Ephesus was located on a number of important land and sea routes, with the result that it was a major center of international trade.<sup>5</sup> Ephesus had a sizeable Jewish community.<sup>6</sup> The city was multi-cultural and multi-ethnic. Ephesus was also a city with many diverse religious beliefs. The harmony of this city had to be maintained by mutual acceptance of differing beliefs in the name of tolerance and syncretism. Therefore,

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 19:23-41. Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.

<sup>2</sup> David Padfield, "Ephesus, Turkey: Library of Celsus, Arcadian Way, Temple of Hardrian," *Bible Land History*, accessed May 24, 2016, <http://www.biblelandhistory.com/turkey/ephesus.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 26.

<sup>4</sup> Trebilco, *Early Christians in Ephesus*, 17.

<sup>5</sup> Trebilco, *Early Christians in Ephesus*, 17.

<sup>6</sup> Trebilco, *Early Christians in Ephesus*, 50.

disciples who claimed Jesus Christ was the absolute Way and Truth and the only God would face enormous pressure from society and peer groups. Facing persecution was inevitable.

This is where the first important parallel for this project begins. In the contemporary culture of an increasingly pluralistic North America, followers of Jesus are being marginalized and labeled as intolerant, even if we are not persecuted. We can also note the similarities between Ephesus and the current metropolitan cities in North America; wealth, centers of travel and trade, and religious pluralism. The epistle to the Ephesians will provide great insight as to how we as disciples, should live out our calling in today's pluralistic society.

### Worship and Prayer Empowers Missional Living

The epistle to the Ephesians addresses the faithful in Jesus Christ.<sup>7</sup> Following Christ faithfully was definitely in Paul's mind when he wrote this letter. In Chapter One, Paul focuses on the spiritual blessings received from God. In the final chapter, he emphasizes the spiritual battles we will encounter against the devil.<sup>8</sup> Paul wants to encourage the faithful Christ followers to continue to live missionally for the Lord.

The key to being faithful servants is to live in the Lord through worship and prayer. Ephesians has two major sections. Section one includes Chapters One to Three,

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<sup>7</sup> Ephesians 1:1.

<sup>8</sup> Ephesians 6:10-20.

and section two includes Chapters Four through Six. Chapters One to Three are written in the context of worship, starting with a hymn of praise. The exhortation in the worship context is in Chapter Two, and a commissioning prayer with doxology and benediction is found in Chapter Three. Chapters Four to Six emphasize the missional living of Christ followers.

Below is the structure of Ephesians demonstrating how worship empowers discipleship:

1. Prologue: Letter sent to the Faithful in Ephesus and the Salutation (1:1-2)
2. Formation of Christ Followers: Worship and Prayer (1:3-3:21)
  - a) The call to worship because of the spiritual blessings received (1:3)
  - b) Grace-motivated Worship – who God is and what God has done (1:4-14)
  - c) Worship motivates us to know God more (1:15-23)
  - d) Grace-filled Exhortation (1): New identity individually (2:1-10)
  - e) Grace-filled Exhortation (2): New identity communally (2:11-22)
  - f) Grace-empowered Mission – Response to the exhortation: (3:1-13)
  - g) Grace-empowered Sending-out prayer with benediction (3:14-21)
3. Missional Living of Christ Followers (4:1-6:9)
  - a) Live a life worthy of the calling (4:1)
  - b) Preserve the unity of the Spirit within the community of Christ (4:2-16)
  - c) Live a life as a new man in Christ (4:17-6:9)
    - i. Live a life as a new man in the image of God (4:17-32)
    - ii. Live as children of Love (5:1-7)
    - iii. Live as children of Light (5:8-14)
    - iv. Live as people of wisdom with thanksgiving (5:15-20)
    - v. Live missionally by submitting to one another (5:21-6:9)
      - Radical spousal relationship (5:22-33)
      - Radical family relationship (6:1-4)
      - Radical master-slave relationship (6:5-9)
4. Missional living is spiritual warfare (6:10-20)
5. Epilogue: The Faithful Tychicus was sent to Ephesus and the Benediction (6:21-24)

### **Grace Motivated Trinitarian Worship (1:3-14)**

After his initial greeting, Paul leads us into worship with a hymn of praise.<sup>9</sup> It is a grace-motivated, Trinitarian worship in response to blessings bestowed by God. The hymn of praise has a refrains in verses 6, 12 and 14. The praise is Trinitarian because of the work of the Father,<sup>10</sup> the Son,<sup>11</sup> and the Holy Spirit.<sup>12</sup> Paul reminds the faithful Christ followers who God is and how blessed they are through the praise and worship.

### **God Is Love and We Are Privileged in His Sight (1:4-6)**

God chose His people in Christ to be holy and blameless before the creation of the world and adopted them as children, because of His love. This is known as Election and is a privilege; it is not because of our good works that we are elect and adopted as His children, and no amount of bad works will cause us to lose this privilege. God has predestined us into His household. Therefore, Paul encourages the faithful to praise God's glorious grace which He has freely given us through the Son He loves.

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<sup>9</sup> Ephesians 1:1-14.

<sup>10</sup> Ephesians 1:4-6.

<sup>11</sup> Ephesians 1:7-12.

<sup>12</sup> Ephesians 1:13-14.

### God Is Gracious and We Are Precious in His Son (1:7-8)

Paul reminds the faithful that our sins are forgiven and we are redeemed in Christ because of God's grace. The price of the ransom to set us free is the life of Jesus, the only begotten Son of God. It shows how precious we are; this is undeserved grace.

### God Is Sovereign and We Are Planned for His Purpose (1:9-12)

Paul reveals God's great purpose – to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ when time reaches fulfillment. We are made to be God's inheritance according to His will. Four times in Ephesians 1:1-14, Paul mentions that God is acting according to His will, purpose and plan.<sup>13</sup> God is sovereign, and there are no 'accidents'. As the loving and sovereign God plans for our lives, we are saturated with God's peace as our hope is anchored in Christ. It is no surprise that Paul encourages the faithful Christ followers to praise God for His glory.

### God Is Forever Faithful and We Are Protected by the Seal of the Holy Spirit (1:13-14)

All would be in vain if we could not keep what we are given, no matter how precious and privileged we are. However, God is forever faithful and gives us the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of our inheritance. Harold Hoehner asserts, "The seal of the Holy Spirit serves as a deposit or down-payment, providing a guarantee of more to come. It

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<sup>13</sup> Ephesians 1:5, 9, 10, 11.

is the initial installment of the believer's future inheritance."<sup>14</sup> Because God is faithful and the Holy Spirit protects us, we praise God for His glory.

Worship ties us closely to God's Story. In Ephesians 1:1-14, Paul takes us into cosmic history from before the creation of this world,<sup>15</sup> to the redemption by the blood of Christ on the Cross,<sup>16</sup> and finally to the future consummation at the end of the age.<sup>17</sup> Knowing what God has done, we comprehend that God is loving, gracious, sovereign and faithful. Through worship, we also understand ourselves more. We are privileged, precious, living with purposes and protected. Therefore, we praise God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

### **Worship Motivates Us to Know God More (1:15-23)**

Worship is our response to God, and worship motivates us to know God more. As worship tells God's Story, who God is and what God has done, our response is yearning to know God more because He is so immeasurably great. Also, for faithful Christ followers to live missionally in this world, we need to have a deeper knowledge of God and our relationship with Him. That is why Paul keeps asking that the God of our Lord, Jesus Christ, give the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that we may know him

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<sup>14</sup> Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians* (Carol Streams, IL: Tyndale, 2008), 39.

<sup>15</sup> Ephesians 1:4.

<sup>16</sup> Ephesians 1:7.

<sup>17</sup> Ephesians 1:10, 14.

better.<sup>18</sup> Paul asks God to continue to reveal Himself so that hearts of His followers will be enlightened and that we will come to know God deeply in three different aspects:

#### Know the Promise: Hope and Secured Future

Paul prays for the hope to which He has called. This knowledge is crucial to Christ followers because we are no longer defined by what we have done. God promises a secure future to those He has called through the Son, Jesus Christ, under the seal of the Holy Spirit.<sup>19</sup> We recognize that we are no longer driven by performance to face the uncertainty of the future, but are empowered by grace to face the certainty that God has promised in eternity as He has called.

#### Know the Purpose: To Live for the Glory of God

Paul prays that we comprehend the riches of God's glorious inheritance in His holy people.<sup>20</sup> In the previous verse 14, the inheritance refers to God Himself. However, the glorious inheritance in verse 18 refers to believers.<sup>21</sup> The meaning of this is two-fold. On one hand, the glorious inheritance will be fully realized in the future when the final consummation comes. We are valuable to God because He paid a significant price to redeem us. On the other hand, our transformed living in this world

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<sup>18</sup> Ephesians 1:17; cf. Colossians 1:9-10; 2:2.

<sup>19</sup> Ephesians 1:18; cf. 1:7, 14.

<sup>20</sup> Ephesians 1:18.

<sup>21</sup> Ephesians 1:18; cf. Deuteronomy 32:9, Psalm 33:12, Colossians 1:27.

brings glory to God and prepares us for the future glory to come. Faithful Christ followers are being transformed into God's image – from glory to glory – by the Holy Spirit.<sup>22</sup> Jesus says, "In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."<sup>23</sup>

In his epistle to the Colossians, Paul encourages those who are raised with Christ to seek things above so that when Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.<sup>24</sup> New Testament Scholar F. F. Bruce reasons, "Paul prays this in order that his readers may appreciate the value which God places on them, His plan to accomplish His eternal purpose through them as the first fruits of the reconciled universe of the future, in order that their lives may be in keeping with this high calling and that they may accept in grateful humility the grace and glory thus lavished on them."<sup>25</sup>

#### Know the Power to Live by

Paul prays that the faithful Christ followers will have a greater understanding of how great the power of God is in their lives.<sup>26</sup> Paul wants us to know the might, extent, and sustainability of the power from God. First, God's power is transformational. It is

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<sup>22</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:18.

<sup>23</sup> Matthew 5:16.

<sup>24</sup> Colossians 3:1-4; cf. Philippians 3:17-21.

<sup>25</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 271.

<sup>26</sup> Ephesians 1:19.



the same power which raised Christ from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms.<sup>27</sup> The magnitude of God's power makes the impossible to possible. Second, God's power is comprehensive. Christ's power in us is far superior to any power in this world.<sup>28</sup> Third, God's power is eternal. This power is sustainable over generations.<sup>29</sup> We need this mighty power to sustain us in spiritual warfare. We are fighting against the rulers, authorities, and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.<sup>30</sup>

The prayer ends with one simple declaration that God has appointed Christ to be head of the Church and placed all things under Him. The Church is Christ's body; the fullness of Him, who fills everything in every way.<sup>31</sup> The Church as Christ's body should manifest His fullness in every way to this world so that it demonstrates unity. This declaration forces contemporary readers to understand discipleship in a communal way – as members of Christ's body – rather than in an individualistic way.

Paul does not begin with the "doing" as the Chapters Four to Six of the epistle to the Ephesians describe the details of missional living. Instead, Paul begins the epistle with worship and prayer as they are the beginning of discipleship and missional living.

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<sup>27</sup> Ephesians 1:20.

<sup>28</sup> Ephesians 1:21.

<sup>29</sup> Ephesians 1:21.

<sup>30</sup> Ephesians 6:12.

<sup>31</sup> Ephesians 1:22-23; cf. Colossians 1:16-18.

Discipleship begins with knowing who God is and what God has done. Our first duty is to respond to God's blessings in worship and prayer.

### **Grace-Filled Exhortation: Redeemed by Grace into Missional Communities (2:1-22)**

Next, Paul exhorts Christ followers to have a deep understanding of who we were before Christ and who we are now. Again we see that the unity of the Church and missional living are both in Paul's mind throughout the epistle. Paul first clarifies Christ followers' identity in Christ. He wants us to understand our identities in order to live in accordance with God's power and grace. Grace-motivated worship should always include grace-filled preaching of the Word of God with exhortation.

#### **Who We Were and Who We Are: An Individual Perspective (2:1-10)**

Paul explicitly points out that we were dead in sins and transgressions and we deserved God's wrath.<sup>32</sup> Not only did we conform to ungodly cultural pressures, but also to Satan, the "ruler of the kingdom of the air,"<sup>33</sup> and to the desires of our sinful flesh.<sup>34</sup> When we pursue the things of this world, we contribute to our death. But God authors our life.

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<sup>32</sup> Ephesians 2:1-3.

<sup>33</sup> Ephesians 2:2; cf. 6:11-12.

<sup>34</sup> Ephesians 2:3; cf. Galatians 5:16-17.

**We Are Alive with Power (2:4-7).** Paul emphasizes that it is only by God's grace and mercy that we are saved. It is by grace and not by works that we are made alive with Christ, raised up with Christ, and seated with Christ. We are not dead anymore but are made alive with power and authority over all things in all ages – a complete transformation from death to life, all by God's grace, mercy, and love.

**We Are Alive with Purpose (2:8-10).** Not only were we made alive with power, but we were also made alive with purpose so that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus. Our purpose is to be God's vessels, manifesting the life of Jesus in our lives, displaying his riches of grace.<sup>35</sup>

Paul also reminds us that we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works.<sup>36</sup> Good works are the work of God in us, and through us. Harold Hoehner asserts that "Paul was telling the Ephesians that God had prepared a path of good works for the believers, and the [God] would perform these works in and through them as they lived by faith. Thus, we do not work *for* God; instead, God performs his work *in and through us*" (cf. Phil 2:13; italics added).<sup>37</sup> In understanding who we are, who God is,

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<sup>35</sup> 2 Timothy 2:21; cf. 2 Corinthians 4:11.

<sup>36</sup> Ephesians 2:9-10.

<sup>37</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 52.

and what God has done, we resolve to live a holy and blameless life in a pluralistic society<sup>38</sup> – a life that is different from the existing cultures and practices.<sup>39</sup>

#### Who We Were and Who We Are: A Communal Perspective (2:11-22)

**We Were Excluded (2:11-12).** It is by grace that God includes us in His community. The first readers of the epistles were outsiders to the circumcised Jews. The Jews were proud to think of themselves as insiders. The Gentiles were outside the covenant of God since they did not have the sign and seal of the covenant: circumcision.<sup>40</sup> As a result, the Gentiles were excluded – separated from Christ and all of the blessings from Him. Paul points out earlier in the epistle that God blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. “In Christ” conveys instrumentality (“through Christ”), but it can have the local sense of “the place” in whom the believers are – the union of believers and Christ.<sup>41</sup> Without Christ, we have no place or privilege at all. However, the Bible says, “He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ephesians 4:17-5:20.

<sup>39</sup> Ephesians 5:21-6:9.

<sup>40</sup> Ephesians 2:11; cf. Genesis 17:9-14.

<sup>41</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 31.

<sup>42</sup> Galatians 3:14.

**We Are One (2:13-22).** The blood of Christ not only brought us from death to life, it brought us out of exclusion. God made Jews and Gentiles a new people and ushered them into union with Him. Paul reminds us that Jesus Christ is the Peace who destroyed the barrier; the wall of hostility, through the reconciling work He did on the cross.<sup>43</sup> Because of the Cross, Jews and Gentiles became in Christ: one group, one person, one body, receiving one gospel, access the same Spirit, one citizenship, one family, one foundation, one Holy Temple.<sup>44</sup> The Bible says, “For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.”<sup>45</sup> Paul emphasizes, “For through Christ both the Jews (who were near) and the Gentiles (who were far away) have access to the Father by one Spirit” (2:18). God’s reconciling work done through Christ made two hostile groups of people into one new humanity to be united with the perfect loving community, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Faithful Christ followers are called to live in unity within this new community.<sup>46</sup> Jesus gave the same exhortation to His disciples before He was arrested for persecution.<sup>47</sup> Living in unity is the manifestation of the glory of the Triune God wherein the Father, the Son and the Spirit live in perfect unity.

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<sup>43</sup> Ephesians 2:13-14.

<sup>44</sup> Ephesians 2:14-21.

<sup>45</sup> Galatians 6:15; cf. Colossians 2:11.

<sup>46</sup> Ephesians 4:1-16.

<sup>47</sup> John 17:20-23.

Through gracious exhortation followed by worship, we all now understand our true identities from an individual and communal perspective. It is essential to know who we are through worship before living out and proclaiming the gospel as scattered worship to live for the glory of God in this pluralistic world. Paul understands, however, that transformation begins by knowing God but must continually be empowered by God. Therefore, Paul prays for God to empower Christ followers to live missionally.

### **Grace-Empowered Mission (3:1-21)**

After grace-motivated worship in Chapter One and grace-filled exhortation in Chapter Two, Paul tells of his mission to encourage us to embrace this grace-driven and empowered mission. Both verses 1 and 14 begin with the phrase “for this reason.” This refers to the immediate context of 2:11-22, and also Chapter Two in its entirety: new identity in Christ.

### **The Ministry of the Mystery by God’s Grace (3:1-13)**

Paul has been entrusted with ministry by God’s grace.<sup>48</sup> According to Jewish tradition, he was a qualified and reputable Jew.<sup>49</sup> God called him to be a minister of the gospel to the Gentiles, teaching about the unsearchable riches of Christ.<sup>50</sup> It is by God’s grace that the mystery of Christ was revealed to the apostles and prophets through the

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<sup>48</sup> Ephesians 3:2, 7-8.

<sup>49</sup> Philippians 3:5-6, 1 Corinthians 15:9.

<sup>50</sup> Ephesians 3:8.

Spirit.<sup>51</sup> The mystery revealed is that the Jews and Gentiles are now fellow heirs, members of the same body and partakers of the same promise.<sup>52</sup> It is the same grace that empowers Paul to be the minister of the Gospel.<sup>53</sup>

The mystery of the gospel is manifested through the unity of the Church. That is why Paul says “His intent was that now, through the Church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.”<sup>54</sup> The unity of the Church shows that Christ defeated all that divides humanity.

As a minister of the gospel, however, Paul has known suffering, and he now encourages us not to lose heart because his suffering is part of his grace-filled mission called by God. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul asserts that the people of God do not just believe in Him, but suffer for Him “but that you will be saved—and that by God. For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ephesians 3:5.

<sup>52</sup> Ephesians 3:6.

<sup>53</sup> Ephesians 3:7.

<sup>54</sup> Ephesians 3:11-12.

<sup>55</sup> Philippians 1:28-30; cf. Philippians 3:12, Colossians 1:24-25.

Paul encourages us that we can approach God with freedom and confidence in Christ through faith.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, Paul's suffering is our glory because we can now join the community of God through the gospel, which brings two groups of people together as one. Paul intentionally tells the faithful Christ followers that he is undeserving of this mission. Fulfillment of the mission to which God calls any of us does not depend on how good we are, but on God.

#### Prayer to Empower Missions (3:14-19)

Paul firmly believes that faithful Christ followers need power from God to embrace and live out the mission he will detail in Chapters Four to Six.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, he ends with a sending prayer.<sup>58</sup> This prayer empowers Christ followers to embrace missional living while they are scattered in this world. Paul prays that Christ may dwell in their hearts through faith. It is noteworthy that the empowerment for which Paul prays is also essentially Trinitarian. The foundation of the power of God is the love of Christ in the Spirit. The love of Christ surpasses all knowledge and understanding.<sup>59</sup> The love of Christ is within the people of God. The Lord's holy people, together, comprehend the power of love from Christ together.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Ephesians 3:12.

<sup>57</sup> Ephesians 4:1-6:9.

<sup>58</sup> Ephesians 3:14-19.

<sup>59</sup> Ephesians 3:19.

<sup>60</sup> Ephesians 3:18.



### Worship Ends with a Missional Benediction (3:20-21)

It is appropriate and essential that worship end with doxology and a missional benediction. All the glory be to God, who is able to do more than we can imagine in the life of every believer. God bestows His blessings on His people through the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the past, and will continue to work in us, with us and through us by His immeasurable power. He will work in us through the Church throughout all generations.

### **Gathered Worship (Ephesians 1-3) Empowers Scattered Worship (Ephesians 4-6)**

Chapters One to Three of the epistle to the Ephesians show the importance of worship and prayer to discipleship and missional living. Christ followers need to comprehend the blessings bestowed from God and we respond with worship and prayer. Through worship and prayer, we yearn to know God more and God shows us who He is and who we are through the Story of God. The understanding of the missions given by God and missional prayer at the end of worship empowers us to live a missional life in scattered worship. Therefore, chapters One to Three are the essential prerequisite to the missional living detailed in Chapters Four to Six. Chapter 4:1 governs the rest of the epistle. Paul exhorts, “As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.” Paul urges faithful Christ followers to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.<sup>61</sup> He also insists that we must

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<sup>61</sup> Ephesians 4:1-16; cf. Philippians 1:27; 2:1-4, Colossians 1:10.

live as new people in Christ, beloved children of God, people of wisdom.<sup>62</sup> Under the governing principle of submitting to one another,<sup>63</sup> Paul advises Christ followers to live missionally and radically in light of our callings – to be radically different from the existing culture in various aspects of life: marriage,<sup>64</sup> family relationships,<sup>65</sup> and master and slave relationships.<sup>66</sup> Paul also reminds Christ followers that living missionally is spiritual warfare and we need to power from God to fight the battles.<sup>67</sup>

### **God's Story and the Stories of Disciples to Witness God**

The Bible is full of narratives which come together in one grand narrative: creation, the fall of humanity, God's redemptive act through Jesus Christ, the new creation. God invites us to grasp who God is, who we are and the meaning of the gospel in light of God's grand narrative.

Narrative – storytelling – is the most common genre in the Bible. Almost 40% of the Old Testament is narrative.<sup>68</sup> The four gospels and the book of Acts were written as narrative. God does not reduce the gospel story to a set of abstract step by step

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<sup>62</sup> Ephesians 4:17-5:20.

<sup>63</sup> Ephesians 5:21.

<sup>64</sup> Ephesians 5:21-33.

<sup>65</sup> Ephesians 6:1-4.

<sup>66</sup> Ephesians 6:5-9.

<sup>67</sup> Ephesians 6:10-20.

<sup>68</sup> Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 78.

instructions or a “salvation plan.” We have deconstructed God’s narrative into separate stories and simple steps, however, in order to urge seekers to prayerfully accept Christ as personal Savior. While it is necessary for seekers to step into faith with a clear step-by-step illustration followed by a decision, it is important to immerse ourselves into God’s grand narrative because He invites us into His stories to discover who He is and who we are. As Gordon Fee explains it,

Biblical narratives tell us about things that happened—but not just any things. Their purpose is to show God at work in his creation and among his people. The narratives glorify him, help us to understand and appreciate him, and give us a picture of his providence and protection. At the same time they also provide illustrations of many other lessons important to our lives.<sup>69</sup>

This section will explore the relationship of worship and witness to God’s Story and how we can discover who God is through the stories of His people. First, we will explore how people of God worship and witness God through His redemptive acts. Second, we will explore how the stories of His people help us discover God. Third, we will explore how God can reveal Himself through stories so that we can live missionally by examining the major characteristics of disciples of Jesus Christ in the New Testament. We believe God is working in us every moment of our lives. God is forming and transforming us to be His disciples. Therefore, the traits of disciples should be the litmus test of stories faithful Christ followers should explore.

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<sup>69</sup> Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible*, 79.

## Discovering God through God's Story

Generations of God's people have been using stories to praise God and testify about God. Teaching and learning about God is never abstract. Stories of what He has done makes God personal to His people.

When God delivered Moses and the Israelites out of Egypt, the Israelites experienced God's mighty power. God divided the Red Sea so they could cross through on dry land. The Israelites witnessed the saving acts of God when the walls of the Red Sea collapsed on the Egyptians who pursued them.<sup>70</sup> Moses and the people of Israel sang praises to God. The contents of the praise were what God had just done for them.<sup>71</sup> Moses' sister Miriam sang the similar praise with the women to reiterate what God had just done.<sup>72</sup>

When God delivered Israelites from Jabin, king of Canaan and his commander Sisera through Deborah and Barak, Deborah and Barak led the people of Israel to sing praises to God. Their praises told in a very detailed account how God delivered them.<sup>73</sup> In the Book of Deuteronomy we read how God told the Israelites to pass on the teachings to the children. They should tell their descendants what God had done and how He rescued them from Egyptians.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Exodus 14:29-31.

<sup>71</sup> Exodus 15:1-19.

<sup>72</sup> Exodus 15:20-21.

<sup>73</sup> Judges 4-5.

<sup>74</sup> Deuteronomy 6, 8.

Many Psalms give thanks to God and retell God's wonderful deeds. They cover the pre-Israelite history such as creation and the flood<sup>75</sup> and the Israelite history from Abraham, the Patriarchs, exodus, deliverance, the wilderness, the conquest and possession of the Promised Land, period of the Judges, periods of the united monarchy, and divided kingdoms. Psalmists praise and thank God by recalling the wonderful deeds of God from Abraham to wilderness period in Psalm 105. "Give praise to the LORD, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts."<sup>76</sup> Similarly, the whole of Psalm 136 praises and gives thanks for the steadfast love of God. The psalmist gave thanks to God with stories of details about God's deliverance from Egyptians and the defeat of kings Sihon and Og. Psalm 137 is a lament from the exilic period as the psalmist decried the situation he was facing and at the same time, he put his trust in the Lord.

In the Book of Acts, Jesus tells His disciples to witness from Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.<sup>77</sup> When Peter and the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter told the Jews the story of Jesus on the Cross. He compared Jesus' death to King David's death.<sup>78</sup> In Acts 3, Peter continued to link the story of Jesus with the Patriarchs and what Moses, Samuel, and other prophets said. Peter and John even said they could not help speaking about what they had seen and

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<sup>75</sup> Psalm 104; 29:10-11.

<sup>76</sup> Psalm 105:1-2.

<sup>77</sup> Acts 1:8.

<sup>78</sup> Acts 2:22-40.

heard.<sup>79</sup> Stephen witnessed Jesus is the Christ by telling the high priest of Israelite history Abraham to Solomon before he died as a martyr.<sup>80</sup> Throughout the Bible, the people of God remember God's redemptive acts by recalling His Story. Story of God is essential to praise God and testify to who God is and what God has done.

### Discovering God through the Stories of God's People

God uses different people for His plan and these people were not perfect. The people God used throughout scripture were from different strata of society with diverse backgrounds: shepherds, prostitutes, and fishermen. God loves to use ordinary people to do extraordinary things – to demonstrate His presence, promises, power, and purposes. The stories of the people of God are not moral lessons or a manual for living in the world. The same can be true for us today. Through our stories, we discover God despite our imperfections.

God invites us to relate to the characters in the narratives. We experience joy, struggle and conflict throughout the narratives during this discovery process. God wants us to join in a personal faith journey to know Him more. God did not hide the weaknesses of human characters in the Bible. Instead, He wants us to discover His promises and His faithfulness in the midst of our failures. Even though we fail, God never ceases to love us and never forsakes us.

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<sup>79</sup> Acts 4:20.

<sup>80</sup> Acts 7.

The Bible is full of stories that all of us can relate to. Despite the sinfulness, failures, inadequacies, fears and doubts of Christ followers, God still wants us to be part of His grand narrative. God calls us to His Mission; He calls us to obey, and He promises us to be with us always. Each narrative in the Bible is to show who God is and who we are. Our lives glorify God as He wants to demonstrate His presence, promises, power and purposes through our failures, doubts and fears. As Paul says “But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.”<sup>81</sup>

#### Discover the Stories that God is Working in His Disciples

The Apostle Paul recalled his conversion story to witness to different audiences three times in the book of Acts, Chapters 9, 22 and 26. However, Paul did not just tell his conversion story; he also testified to God by telling his weaknesses to the Corinthians<sup>82</sup> and his journey in which God used him to be His apostle to Galatians.<sup>83</sup>

Apart from the story of our redemption through grace, we have many other life stories because God works in and through our lives every day. The will of God is that we become disciples who obey Him and glorify Him with our lives. Therefore, we need to

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<sup>81</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:9.

<sup>82</sup> 2 Corinthians 11-12.

<sup>83</sup> Galatians 1-2.

know the traits of disciples to discover God's stories in our lives. The following are five traits of disciples of Jesus Christ:

1. Love Jesus above all. Jesus says, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes, even his own life – he cannot be my disciple."<sup>84</sup>
2. Love and obey the Word of God. Jesus says, "To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.'"<sup>85</sup>
3. Deny ourselves and follow Him. Jesus says, "Then he said to them all, 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.'"<sup>86</sup> To take up our cross daily is to confess Jesus is the Lord of our lives. Disciples live for Christ, not for self anymore.<sup>87</sup> For the first three traits of disciples, we should pay attention to our daily journey of obedience to the Lord's teachings. We should also look into how God's love dwells in us through our worship and service because He is our Lord and our God. We can recount how God guides us through difficult situations and the stories of triumph through the obedience of the faith.

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<sup>84</sup> Luke 14:26.

<sup>85</sup> John 8:31.

<sup>86</sup> Luke 9:23.

<sup>87</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:5, Romans 14:7-8.



4. Love one another. Jesus says, “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”<sup>88</sup> To love another entails building relationships with others. God does not call His disciples to be alone but exist in a community of faith. Jesus Christ is the foundation of all relationships, and we are called to love one another. To love is to encourage,<sup>89</sup> to forgive,<sup>90</sup> to build up,<sup>91</sup> and to serve.<sup>92</sup> Therefore, disciples have to heed the stories of successes and failures to love one another.

5. Bless others because of the blessing bestowed upon us by God. Jesus says, I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ... This is to my Father’s glory that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. ... You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.<sup>93</sup>

The bearing of fruit is God’s grace and blessings to us. We bearing fruit when we remain in God. Therefore, as long as we are planted in Him, we will bear fruit for Him.<sup>94</sup>

We will also bless others by yielding fruit of the gospel. Below, Table 1 will help us take note of how God works in our lives:

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<sup>88</sup> John 13:35.

<sup>89</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Hebrews 3:13; 10:25.

<sup>90</sup> Colossians 3:13.

<sup>91</sup> Romans 14:19, Colossians 3:16, Ephesians 5:19, 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Hebrews 10:24.

<sup>92</sup> Galatians 5:13, 1 Peter 4:10, 1 John 3:16–17.

<sup>93</sup> John 15:5, 8, 16.

<sup>94</sup> Psalm 1:2-3; cf. Galatians 5:22-23.

Table 1: How God Works in Our Lives through Stories

<b>Special Qualities of disciples</b>	Loves Jesus above all; Loves and Obeys the Word of God; Jesus is the Lord	Blessed by God (bear fruit)	Love one other; Bless others.
<b>Types of Life Stories</b>	Obey and follow; Worship and serve; Triumph through faith; Thirsty for God's Word.	Redemption through grace; God's provision; God's protection; God's strengthening; God's grace; Prayers answered.	Gospel Sharing, Caring Prayers, Helping Others. Forgive one other; Encourage one another, Build up one another, Serve one another

Every moment of life is for God to mold us as His disciples. Therefore, we must be more comprehensive in our discoveries. Every big or small story of a disciple's life can manifest God's work, and help others to articulate the power, kindness and faithfulness of God. We can make sense of the purpose of our life stories as what God uses to remind and help us raise the special qualities of our lives as a disciple. As we turn our attention to the qualities of discipleship such as: Love Jesus Above All; Obey the Word of God, and Take Jesus as Lord of My Life (2<sup>nd</sup> column of chart), we will be mindful of the stories related to these areas of life, such as Obey and Follow; Worship and Serve; and Triumph through Faith, and Thirsty for God's Word.

### Conclusion

Worship is the beginning and the end of discipleship. Worship empowers discipleship and discipleship leads people to worship. This chapter outlined the biblical and theological foundation of the relationship between worship, discipleship, and

missional living. God uses every moment of our lives to transform us more and more into His image, empowering our worship and exhorting us to missional living. In this way, our stories become more and more a part of God's Story.

## CHAPTER THREE

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Introduction**

This chapter will bring different authors' perspectives on worship as the beginning and the end of discipleship. Gathered worship allows the worshipers to comprehend the greatness of God as well as empowering Christ followers to live missionally as their scattered worship. Discipleship brings people closer to God in order to worship Him in His glory. This chapter also discusses why the interaction of God's Story and the stories of Christ followers can help make disciples.

#### **Worship Is the Beginning of Discipleship**

In order to comprehend why worship empowers discipleship, we need to understand worship as a gift of grace from the Triune God. God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, calls His people to gather and worship Him for His glory. Carefully planned worship can also re-tell God's Story. Gathered in worship, we encounter the Triune God through proclaiming, enacting and singing God's redemptive Story. Worship is formational, transforming Christ followers as we worship. Worship is missional. Christ followers are living in the already-but-not-yet world with tension between the flesh and the Holy Spirit. Enacting God's Story through Word and Sacrament encourages and can empower Christ followers to live faithfully in this world. When we leave gathered

worship, we are sent into the world in scattered worship. This continues our response to God – the work of the people.

### Worship Is a Gift of Grace from the Triune God

Christ followers are called to enjoy God's presence and respond with worship. We do not deserve God's grace and we have nothing to offer Him because everything already belongs to God. N.T. Wright asserts that "it is all God's work: because of the cross, being a Christian, or being a church, does not mean that we've got it all together. It means proclaiming that God's got it all together; and that we are merely, as Paul says, those who are overwhelmed by his love."<sup>1</sup> In a similar way, Clayton Schmidt points out that "worship enables the relationship between God and God's people; that is a gift of grace, for God is the one who chooses to show up when we worship."<sup>2</sup> Simon Chan echoes that thought when he writes, "Worship can never be something we do for God. All human attempts to initiate worship can only result in distorting the glory of God. The glory of God is the glory of his self-giving, and all true worship must begin with the truth that everything we are and have is a gift."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> N. T. Wright, *For All God's Worth: True Worship and the Calling of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 18.

<sup>2</sup> Clayton Schmit, *Sent and Gathered: A Worship Manual for the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009), 518-520, Kindle.

<sup>3</sup> Simon Chan, *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshiping Community* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009), 620-623, Kindle.

It is by grace that the Father gave us His only begotten Son to die for our sins on the Cross, and He was raised in three days so that we can share communion with God through Christ in the Holy Spirit. It is also by grace that the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit to be in fellowship with us.

God approaches us with tremendous grace and wants us to enjoy His presence. As James Torrance emphasizes, “The Father has given us the Son and the Spirit to draw us into a life of shared communion – of participating through the Spirit in the Son’s communion with the Father – that we might be drawn in love into the very Trinitarian life of God himself.”<sup>4</sup> We would have nothing to offer, to please, and to glorify God if Jesus Christ had not led us to worship Him. We would not be able to worship God if the Holy Spirit did not enable us. The Holy Spirit enables us to join in with Christ’s worship with the Father in worship and prayer.<sup>5</sup> Even our response to God is made through Jesus Christ, our representative, Jesus Christ, God Himself, worships God on our behalf and He represents us to respond to God.<sup>6</sup> James Torrance emphasizes that “Christ leads our worship, bears our sorrow on His heart and intercedes for us, presenting us to the Father in Himself as God’s dear children and uniting us with Himself in His life in the Spirit.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> James Torrance, *Worship, Community, and the Triune God of Grace* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1996), 36.

<sup>5</sup> Robin Parry, *Worshipping Trinity: Coming Back to the Heart of Worship* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012), 12.

<sup>6</sup> Parry, *Worshipping Trinity*, 76.

<sup>7</sup> Torrance, *Triune God of Grace*, 29.

Christ followers receive God's grace through Word and Sacrament - the two "means" of grace. Michael Quicke points out that "preaching belongs within Trinitarian worship – initiated, activated, and motivated by the Triune God as preachers call others to hear and respond afresh to God's Word by renewed living out his Story."<sup>8</sup>

Michael Horton affirms, "If baptism is a means of initiating grace, the Supper is a means of persevering grace."<sup>9</sup> All other elements in worship, prayer, offering, and singing, are merely our response to God's grace. We are not the givers in the worship because God gave everything to us first.

Like worship, the call of discipleship is a gift of grace. Through our encounter with God in gathered worship, Christ followers can be transformed. We can then be sent into the world at the end of gathered worship to proclaim and live out the gospel as scattered worship. In his classic work, *The Cost of Discipleship*, German theologian and pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer states, "The only man who has the right to say that he is justified by grace alone is the man who left all to follow Christ. Such a man knows that the call to discipleship is a gift of grace, and that the call is inseparable from grace."<sup>10</sup> Grace-filled worship can empower Christ followers to live grace-filled missional lives to the glory of God.

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<sup>8</sup> Michael J. Quicke, *Preaching as Worship: An Integrative Approach to Formation in Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), 97.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Horton, *A Better Way: Rediscovering the Drama of God-Centered Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 119.

<sup>10</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 51.

## Worship Enacts God's Story

Christ followers can comprehend the grand redemptive narrative of God: creation, fall, redemption and consummation through worship. Robert Webber wrote, "Worship gathers disciples to sing, tell, and enact God's Story to the world from its beginning to its end."<sup>11</sup> Mike Cospers summarizes comprehensively, with insight from Bryan Chapell,<sup>12</sup>

The overarching movement is a retelling of the Story. It is remembering that God is holy (adoration), we are sinners (confession and lament), Jesus has saved us from our sins (assurance, thanksgiving, petition and instruction), and Jesus sends us on His mission (charge). It's a movement that runs parallel to another way of thinking about the story of the gospel: creation, fall, redemption, and consummation.<sup>13</sup>

In our gathered worship, Christ followers are reminded that we are God's people. We are members of God's household in which Christ is the Head and we are the body. Worship also encourages us to remember that the Church is the precious bride of Christ, the temple of God, and that, as part of the Church, we are a royal priesthood. We can experience empowerment from the Holy Spirit as we remember the redemptive acts of God.

As we hear the narrative of God, our faith is strengthened because our stories and faith journeys intertwine with God's redemptive Story. As Bradley Randall states,

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<sup>11</sup> Robert Webber, *Ancient-Future Worship: Proclaiming and Enacting God's Narrative* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008), 40.

<sup>12</sup> Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape our Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009), 99.

<sup>13</sup> Mike Cospers, *Rhythms of Grace: How the Church's Worship Tells the Story of the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 122.



“True faith in God is always connected to the Story of God’s redemptive work in history — both the history of the Church and our individual history — for we are continually finding our story in the greater narrative of God’s Story.”<sup>14</sup>

As foretold by God to Abraham<sup>15</sup>, the Israelites were delivered from the Egyptians after four hundred years of oppression and slavery. After experiencing the mighty and miraculous acts of deliverance, Moses and the Israelites praised God for what God had done. The Israelites sang with overflowing joy,

I will sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted.  
Both horse and driver he has hurled into the sea.  
The LORD is my strength and my defense;  
he has become my salvation.  
He is my God, and I will praise him,  
my father’s God, and I will exalt him.  
The LORD is a warrior;  
the LORD is his name.<sup>16</sup>

The glory, majesty, and holiness of God were proclaimed in praise,

Who among the gods is like you, LORD?  
Who is like you—  
majestic in holiness, awesome in glory,  
working wonders.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Randall C. Bradley, *From Memory to Imagination: Reforming the Church’s Music* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 3.

<sup>15</sup> Genesis 15:13-14.

<sup>16</sup> Exodus 15:1-3.

<sup>17</sup> Exodus 15:11.

God was the Author of their deliverance. God was the Subject, Object and the Center of worship in Moses' praise song. It was all about God's character and His work among His people for His glory.

Mike Cospers asserts, "God created worship, and created it anew in Christ. Thus, not only is He the supreme object of all our worship and praise, He's also the author that gives us life and breath, vision and redemption, eyes to see, ears to hear, and mouths to declare this goodness and glory."<sup>18</sup> Michael Horton agrees, saying, "God was not only central as an object of worship but also as a subject— an actor, who reconstitutes strangers and aliens as His own redeemed people each week."<sup>19</sup> Worship is not singing praises in an abstract way. Our singing must always be done with stories of what God has done, to His glory. By reminiscing the past, we praise God in the present and anticipate God's future consummation of His saving deeds and the new heaven and new earth.

Worship proclaims God's faithfulness, holiness and glory through enacting God's Story. Again from Robert Webber, "Worship is a narrative – God's narrative of the world from its beginning to its end. How will the world know its own story unless we do that story in public worship?"<sup>20</sup> Bruce Benson points out, "Intensive worship is intensely performative in nature and liturgical actions are not just add-ons. Instead, we 'perform' the Gospel story each time we enact it; when we celebrate God's Story, we proclaim it

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<sup>18</sup> Cospers, *Rhythms of Grace*, 76.

<sup>19</sup> Horton, *Better Way*, 15.

<sup>20</sup> Webber, *Ancient-Future Worship*, 39-40.

afresh. We remember the past and anticipate the future. We eat the bread and drink the cup because Jesus has invited us to do so.”<sup>21</sup>

Preaching and the Lord’s Supper have crucial roles in telling the Story of God. Bryan Chapell writes, “The Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Upper Room tell the same gospel story – the latter tells the story by its symbols, while the former tells the story by its structure.”<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Robert Webber believed, “God’s Story is proclaimed in Word and Table, in that when we hear God’s Story; we see God’s Story.”<sup>23</sup>

The narrative of preaching helps Christ followers re-calibrate our lives in light of the redemptive narrative of God. The story preached helps us to realize we are the characters in the redemptive history. Michael Horton has written, “Doctrine and practical instruction will be driven home in our hearts as they are embedded in the dramatic telling and retelling of every biblical story in the light of its overarching story centering on Jesus Christ.”<sup>24</sup>

Through the bread and wine at the Lord’s Supper, we remember Jesus Christ, in whom all things were created, and was the One who came to this world as the incarnate Son of God. We remember our sinful nature and how we fall short of the glory of God. We are also reminded of His death on the Cross and His resurrection from the empty

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<sup>21</sup> Bruce Benson, *Liturgy as a Way of Life: Embodying the Arts in Christian Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013), 102.

<sup>22</sup> Chapell, *Christ-Centered Worship*, 99.

<sup>23</sup> Webber, *Ancient-Future Worship*, 106.

<sup>24</sup> Horton, *Better Way*, 57.

tomb. We remember His time with the disciples after His Resurrection and His Ascension. The Lord's Supper reminds Christ followers of how deep God's love is for us and this story can empower us. Robert Webber wrote, "Worship connects me with the past, gives meaning to the present, and inspires hope for the future as my soul and spirit become blended again into the drama of Christ's life, death and resurrection."<sup>25</sup>

### Worship is Formational

Although the sole purpose of worship is to glorify God, people of God can be formed and transformed in worship. The ancient Christian principle of *Lex orandi, lex credendi* is translated "The law of prayer is the law of belief." It means that what we worship becomes what we believe. Sometimes this phrase is expanded to *Lex orandi, lex credendi, Lex Vivendi*: the way we worship is what we believe and how we live.

Worship can have a great impact on the spiritual formation of Christ followers. Simon Chan points out, "Certain good things do happen to people when they worship God in spirit and in truth; we may call these by-products "intrinsic goods." For example, in encountering the awesome God we learn the virtue of humility; in thanking God we form the virtue of gratitude; in worshiping together we develop cooperation."<sup>26</sup> James K. A. Smith has written,

Worship and the practices of Christian formation are first and foremost the way the Holy Spirit invites us into union with the Triune God.  
Worship is the arena in which we encounter God and are formed by God

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<sup>25</sup> Robert Webber, *Worship as a Verb* (Nashville, TN: Star Song Publishing Group, 1992), 23.

<sup>26</sup> Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, 656-658, Kindle.

in and through the practices in which the Holy Spirit is present — centering rituals to which God makes a promise (the sacraments).<sup>27</sup>

Under the influence of the Enlightenment, some faith traditions began to rely on intellectual nourishment as the primary means of Christian Education. Curricula of the Christian Education focused on enriching intellectual knowledge. Sunday classes that focused on instruction and edification became the primary means of discipleship. Sermons became didactic and instructive. This trend was grounded on the assumption that Christ followers could be transformed merely by knowing about God.

However, transformation does not simply happen through instruction, but by changing the imagination. The way we teach and live illustrates what shapes us. Our actions are just as important as the contents of the message. Randall Bradley shares, “Imagination is more than knowledge; many people are able to understand what is but can’t imagine what could be. Other people spend their lives gaining more knowledge, believing that their quest for knowledge will change them and their world. But without imagination, knowledge will not be transformative.”<sup>28</sup>

According to Debra and Ron Rienstra, there are four dimensions of language in worship: expressive, aesthetic, instructive and memorial. Each is crucial to the formation of disciples and none of them should be neglected.<sup>29</sup> Our worship needs to

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<sup>27</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013), 3251-3253, Kindle.

<sup>28</sup> Bradley, *From Memory to Imagination*, 229-230.

<sup>29</sup> Debra Rienstra and Ron Rienstra, *Worship Words: Discipling Language for Faithful Ministry*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009), 29-39.

target not only the intellectual level, but also the affective level. James K. A. Smith writes, “Because we are liturgical animals who are defined by what we love and that our love and desires are primed and shaped by formative practices, then a holistic model of Christian education, whether in the church, school, or university, needs to involve a pedagogy of desire.”<sup>30</sup>

Michael Horton points out in the context of preaching,

The goal is to *rescript* the lives of worshipers by giving them another plot that draws the world and their personal histories together into a meaningful whole. Our goal is not to accommodate the Christian plot to the shallow and destructive plots of “the contemporary context” but to accommodate ourselves and our hearers to the real drama of history.<sup>31</sup>

By re-scripting, Horton means that the purpose of preaching is to form and transform the disciples to see the world through Kingdom and redemptive lenses. Liturgical practices re-orient, restore, and renew us, allowing us to perceive things from a Kingdom perspective and enabling us to look at the world on a deeper level, with the heart and with affection, rather than just through an intellectual encounter.

According to James K. A. Smith, “We need to be regularly immersed in the ‘true story’ of the whole world. That is, our imaginations need to be restored, recalibrated, and realigned by an affective immersion in the Story of God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.”<sup>32</sup> Smith further emphasizes,

We need to learn the true Story “by heart,” at a gut level, and let it seep into our background in order to then shape our perception of the world. This happens

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<sup>30</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 511-515, Kindle.

<sup>31</sup> Horton, *Better Way*, 57.

<sup>32</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 3492-3493, Kindle.

primarily and normatively in the practices of Christian worship— provided that the practices of Christian worship intentionally carry, embody, enact, and rehearse the normative shape of the Christian Story.<sup>33</sup>

It is not the content of the message, but rather it is the form that tells the Story.

Smith believes, “Worship is not just the dissemination of some content or the expression of an ‘inner’ feeling, but the very form of worship tells the Story.”<sup>34</sup>

On the other hand, liturgy without proper understanding results in dead rituals. Even though liturgy forms habits, critical theological reflection on the reason for the spiritual disciplines is equally as important. Simon Chan rightly points out,

The worshipers are truly worshiping when "lost in wonder, love and praise," not when thinking about the most profound definition of praise. But thinking about profound definitions is still needed if the community is to improve its worship. These two processes, participation and reflection, must be ongoing for a community to remain vibrant.<sup>35</sup>

### Worship is Missional

Gathered worship should not be limited to Christ followers, but should also welcome people who would like to know God. In worship, transformation of those who are seeking God can happen because they will encounter Him. Gathered worship is a venue for seekers and even non-seekers to observe this relationship of God and His people: God speaks and the people of God respond.

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<sup>33</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 3499-3502, Kindle.

<sup>34</sup> Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 3612-3613, Kindle.

<sup>35</sup> Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, 831-833, Kindle.

While we must be clear that the primary goal of worship is not evangelism, conversion, transformation, and renewal could occur during worship. Gathered worship ends by sending people into the world. Christ followers are called to live radical lives, embracing the Kingdom values as salt and light for the glory of God. We are transformed, not for our own sake, but for the sake of the world and for the glory of God in scattered worship. Simon Chan points out, “Worship was never meant to serve any other purpose except to focus our hearts on the glory of God. The end of worship is worship.”<sup>36</sup> Mike Cospers similarly points out, “Worship begins and ends with the gospel. When we gather, we celebrate that gospel, encouraging one another and preparing one another to be sent back into the world on gospel-fueled mission. Our story as God’s people is now intimately tied to the gospel story.”

In Romans 12:1, Paul writes that we are not called to conform to the pattern of this world, but to be transformed to influence the world. The word translated “worship” is the Greek word *leitourgia* which means “the work of the people.” Our scattered worship, what we do in the world for Jesus Christ, is part of our work as the people of God. Melanie Ross quotes Sally Morgenthau, “The worship of God is central to what it means being a disciple in that the destination is not corporate worship in the building but the people God wanted to touch.”<sup>37</sup> Clayton Schmit similarly asserts, “Sending is the primary element of preparation for a demanding aspect of worship

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<sup>36</sup> Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, 630, Kindle.

<sup>37</sup> Melanie Ross, *Evangelical Versus Liturgical: Defying a Dichotomy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 45.



(action) that lasts typically from one Sunday morning to the next. During the week, the faithful are engaged in outward worship, the work of God's people, which might be called 'the living liturgy of discipleship.'"<sup>38</sup>

James K. A. Smith agrees,

The ending of Christian worship, then, is a sending. Having encountered God in Word and sacrament, we are transformed and renewed and empowered by the Spirit to take up once again the original vocation of humanity: to be God's image-bearers by cultivating all the possibilities latent in God's creation, now renewing and restoring a broken, fallen world.<sup>39</sup>

Ruth Meyers also agrees,

When worship is mission, the assembly embodies and inhabits worship in such a way that ritual texts and patterns come alive, for people today, through speaking and singing, in symbols and actions. Such worship turns outward, for the sake of the world. It is true liturgy, in the deepest sense of the word: work for the common good, a public service.<sup>40</sup>

The end of gathered worship is the beginning in scattered worship. Our worship cannot be "safe." Worship is a dangerous thing because we will encounter God and respond with our lives to participate God's Mission.<sup>41</sup>

Jesus Christ is our Savior, Redeemer, Victor, Healer, Comforter and Provider. In this world, however, we experience sickness, brokenness, hurt, oppression, poverty and injustice. We are reminded during gathered worship that we are living in an

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<sup>38</sup> Schmit, *Sent and Gathered*, 919-921, Kindle.

<sup>39</sup> Smith, *Imaging the Kingdom*, 378-380, Kindle.

<sup>40</sup> Ruth A. Meyers, *Missional Worship, Worshipful Mission: Gathering as God's People, Going Out in God's Name* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 36.

<sup>41</sup> Mark Labberton, *The Dangerous Act of Worship: Living God's Call to Justice* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2007), 430-431, Kindle.

eschatological tension - “the-already-but-not-yet.” Gerrit Immink points out, “Because of the resurrection of Christ, the Church has a firm reason to expect a real transformation of this world. The means that in the midst of the ambivalence of the present world, the Church knows the evil powers will not continue to keep us in their grip.”<sup>42</sup>

Christ followers are encouraged and empowered by the eschatological hope brought by the resurrected Christ to live as Kingdom people and to bring hope to others. We are urged by the Holy Spirit to bring people to worship God to experience the same hope. As Simon Chan writes, “True worship heightens rather than resolves the tension, and this is because in the liturgy the Eucharistic presence of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit is actualized again and again, in proclamation and in Eucharistic celebration.”<sup>43</sup>

This eschatological tension sustains the mission of the Church. This tension is not supposed to be resolved but to be embraced. Kingdom people are supposed to live in the world but not be of the world. Simon Chan emphasizes, “The moment it [the Church] resolves the tension either by becoming totally immersed in this world or by divorcing itself from the world, it ceases to be the true hope of the world, even when it is involved in all sorts of ‘mission’ activities and programs.”<sup>44</sup> Warren Wiersbe has the same concern, “[Worshippers] attend services faithfully week after week, pay their tithes,

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<sup>42</sup> Gerrit Immink, *The Touch of the Sacred* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 91.

<sup>43</sup> Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, 1941-1942, Kindle.

<sup>44</sup> Chan, *Liturgical Theology*, 1065-1067, Kindle.

and do a job in the church now and then, but what happens at the church has no relationship with the rest of their activities.”<sup>45</sup>

The Church exists for a mission. Christ followers are the agents of God’s grace, hope, peace and reconciliation. We are reminded that the Father sent the Son, Father and the Son sent the Spirit, and Father, the Son, and the Spirit sent us into this world. Not only are we sent out by God as a community to live as the people of God offering hope in this world, but we also bear God's image. We attract people to worship God because of the wonderful hope and unimaginable strength in us from God which is radically different from the world. Mike Cospers calls this,

The gospel rhythm. Sent and gathered, always worshiping and regular worshiping together, with the story of the gospel throbbing in regular rhythms at the heart of the Church: this is who you are, this is your God, this is your story. It’s a life-giving and community-building pulse, and when the gospel is at the center – remembered, declared in unity, and displayed in the Church’s worship – it’s a rhythm of grace.<sup>46</sup>

### **Interaction of God’s Story and Our Stories**

Telling God’s Story glorifies God as stories relate our lives to God and witness God’s grace and truth to the hearers. Scott McClellan writes, “Christ followers are compelled to tell His Story. This is not a job or a prerequisite for getting into heaven—it’s who we are. We see Him working in the world, we hear His voice, we tell those

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<sup>45</sup> Warren Wiersbe, *Real Worship, Playground, Battle Ground or Holy Ground* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000), 161.

<sup>46</sup> Cospers, *Rhythms of Grace*, 82.

stories. As He said, we will be His witnesses."<sup>47</sup> We need to understand the gospel and the nature of the Church in light of God's narrative in order to be God's faithful witnesses. Telling God's Story also brings people closer to God. Discipleship happens when God's Story, our stories and stories of seekers and non-seekers intertwine.

### Understanding the Gospel in Light of God's Grand Narrative

In this post-Christendom world, Christ followers are wrestling with the interrelationship of church, mission, gospel, and culture. In the pluralistic West, we can no longer assume that people have any significant background in Christianity. Contemporary rationalism states that all truth is relative. Didactic and persuasive approaches to discipleship seem no longer as effective as before. We must use increasingly innovative ways to engage with, communicate with, and disciple people while, at the same time, the Church is being increasingly marginalized. It could be argued that we should approach the inter-relationship of gospel, church, culture and mission of God in light of "stories."

Stories are powerful tools to communicate the gospel and empower the growth of Christians. Gerald Sittser points out,

The biblical story is primary; theological reflection, however, necessary and important, is secondary. Theology tells us how to think and what to believe; the biblical story provides the actual content of belief because it describes how God has acted in the world. Theology is an abstraction;

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<sup>47</sup> Scott McClellan, *Tell Me a Story: Finding God (and Ourselves) Through Narrative* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2013), 101.

the biblical story is real, not as a photograph of a person is real, not as the verbal description of a person is real, but as an actual person is real.<sup>48</sup>

To understand the Mission of God fully, we need to understand the plan of God as it is revealed from Genesis through Revelation. The biblical narrative shows who God really is and what God's plans are. Jerry Sittser claims, "Theology tells us how to think and what to believe; the biblical story provides the actual content of belief because it describes how God has acted in the world."<sup>49</sup>

The Story of God compelled Christ followers in the early Church to embrace God's mission and make the world their mission field. Chris Wright asserts, "[The disciples] knew the Story they were in. They understood that the Story had just reached a decisive moment in Jesus of Nazareth, and they know what the rest of the Story demanded."<sup>50</sup> Bruce Ashford believes, "In order to build a biblical-theological framework for understanding God's Mission, the Church's mission, and the Church's mission to the nations, one must first understand the unified biblical narrative, including its four major plot movements--creation, fall, redemption, and restoration."<sup>51</sup> It is essential to survey the grand scheme of Scripture, beginning with the creation, the fall, the redemption and the final consummation. This calls for a detailed study of Israelite

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<sup>48</sup> Jerry Sittser, *A Grace Revealed: How God Redeems the Story of Your Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 433-436, Kindle.

<sup>49</sup> Sittser, *Grace Revealed*, 433-436, Kindle.

<sup>50</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 36.

<sup>51</sup> Bruce Ashford, *Theology and Practice of Mission: God, the Church, and the Nations* (Nashville, Tennessee, Broadman, 2011), 6.

history: the call of Abraham, the exodus redemption, the Sinai covenant, the wanderings of Israel in the desert, the monarchy, the exile and the return of Israelites. The Incarnation of Jesus Christ, His ministries on earth, His death, His resurrection and His ascension will help us understand how Jesus was the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel. Pentecost and the missionary journeys of the disciples of early churches demonstrate how God can use His Church to accomplish His Mission. The anticipation of the second coming of Christ, the judgment, and the final consummation encourages us to hope for the final fulfillment of all the promises of God.

Understanding the gospel in light of God's grand narrative helps Christ followers discern the deeper meaning of the good news of Jesus Christ. We cannot limit the gospel. Individual salvation is an essential part of the Mission of God, but not the complete picture. As Chris Wright warns, "One of the dangers with a word like 'gospel' is that we all love it so much (rightly), and want to share it passionately (rightly again), that we don't take time to explore its full biblical content."<sup>52</sup> This kind of gospel presentation focuses on the individual salvation through the work of Jesus on the Cross without taking the cosmic history of God into consideration. When this happens, the gospel becomes anthropocentric rather than theocentric. By disconnecting the gospel from God's grand narrative, the only thing that matters is the personal relationship with God. Therefore, we use evangelistic methods such as four spiritual laws to invite people to repent and accept Jesus Christ into their lives to become their personal Savior and

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<sup>52</sup> Wright, *Mission of God's People*, 31.

the Lord. Scott McKnight cautions, “When the [salvation] plan gets separated from the Story [God’s grand narrative], the plan almost always becomes abstract, propositional, logical, rational, and philosophical and, most importantly, de-storified and unbiblical.”<sup>53</sup>

It is imperative to comprehend and communicate the gospel from both the individual salvation perspective and the perspective of God’s grand narrative. An individualistic view approaches the question of “What is the gospel” in light of the question of “What must I do to be saved?” The cosmic view approaches the question of “What is the gospel?” in light of the question of “What hope is there for the world?” As Tim Keller writes, “The former perspective offers the good news of how you can get right with God, and the latter offers the biblical good news of what God will fully accomplish in history through the salvation of Jesus.”<sup>54</sup>

The Story of God also informs and forms the mission of the Church. Craig Van Gelder writes, “The Church is God’s demonstration plot in the world. Its very existence demonstrates that His redemptive reign has already begun. Its very presence invites the world to watch, listen, examine, and consider accepting God’s reign as a superior way of living.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Scot McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel: The Original Good News Revisited* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 62.

<sup>54</sup> Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 32.

<sup>55</sup> Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church: Proclaiming and Enacting God’s Narrative* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008), 200.

## Discipleship: Connecting the Stories

As God uses His Story to demonstrate who He is and His intended plan for the Church and the world, He also invites us to be part of His Story. Each of His disciples' stories is a significant part of the grand narrative of God. Scott McClellan wrote, "God gives us His Story that we might get a glimpse of who He is. But He does not stop there. God extends to us a story to enter, a story to put on, a story to tell."<sup>56</sup>

The challenge for Christ followers today is to engage our own redemptive stories in light of the gospel of Jesus Christ – to relate the stories of individual believers, seekers and non-seekers to the redemptive narrative of God and find the true meaning of these stories. Again quoting McClellan, "Story is the structure through which God gives us His gospel and sends us out into the world. Story is a lens through which we might see the world and better understand its meaning and movements."<sup>57</sup>

Leighton Ford has written, "The Story of the God of grace is so important today. People all around us are drowning in guilt or hatred, convinced they are unforgiven, that they 'have it comin.' They need to hear the Story you and I have to tell: the Story of the grace of the Son."<sup>58</sup> Christ followers dare not believe that our stories are random events. Instead, each individual story is authored by the love of our Father, through the grace of the Son and guided by the Holy Spirit. Our redemptive stories will make sense

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<sup>56</sup> McClellan, *Tell Me a Story*, 60.

<sup>57</sup> McClellan, *Tell Me a Story*, 20.

<sup>58</sup> Leighton Ford, *The Power of Story: Helping Others Connect with God's Great Story* (Charlotte, NC: Leighton Ford Ministries, 2014), 1329-1331, Kindle.



when we interpret them in light of God's Story. As Jerry Sittser asserts, "Knowing the biblical story provides perspective, a foundation for faith, and a vision of hope. It will help you to believe that the story of your life does not consist of a series of random, disconnected events that have no meaning or purpose."<sup>59</sup>

The Church is the place where God's Story, the stories of His redeemed people, present and past, and the stories of the seekers and non-seekers intersect and interact. "The Church" does not necessarily mean a church building but a place where the people of God are present with the Spirit of God. The interaction of stories can happen in coffee shops, workplaces, homes, on public transportation, in orphan homes, supermarkets and church buildings – any place where life is happening.

Alan Roxburgh believes, "The primary focus should not be on the 'church' as a gathered place, but places in the neighborhoods and communities where we live so we can ask what God is already doing ahead of us in these ordinary places."<sup>60</sup> Alan Hirsch and Tim Catchim similarly emphasize, "The biblical algorithm being communicated through the word *ecclesia* represents God's people as a dynamic, trans-local, social force that manifests itself in multidimensional ways. By engaging this distinct view of *ecclesia*, we can no longer limit the local church to a distinct building and a certain denominational preference or style."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Sittser, *Grace Revealed*, 626-630, Kindle.

<sup>60</sup> Alan J Roxburgh, *Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), 71.

<sup>61</sup> Alan Hirsch and Tim Catchim, *The Permanent Revolution: Apostolic Imagination and Practice for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2012), xxxvii.

Many attractional churches try to address the needs of the community by attracting people to a church building. Many of the leaders of attractional churches believe that with a propositional presentation of the gospel, the seekers will become Christ followers. However, this way of reaching out not only waters down the full meaning of gospel, often skipping the crucial portions of God's grand narrative, but it also creates a chasm between the gospel presenter and gospel itself because the gospel presentation has no association with the life stories of presenter. Instead, we should present the gospel story to our listeners along with our redemptive life stories—stories which are consistent with the gospel we present. Gospel proclamation and demonstration must go hand-in-hand.

Also, in post-modern society where there are many religions and all truths are relative, stories indeed are more effective ways to communicate the gospel and disciple Christ followers in this pluralistic world than rational argument with the seekers.

Leighton Ford has written:

Evangelism that is rooted in the logical nature of the gospel, the verifiable claims of Christ, and the clear evidence of the resurrection has always been valid and effective. But rational arguments are not as persuasive in our postmodern age as they were in the modern era. A new evangelism, based on a narrative paradigm, is the evangelism of the postmodern era. It presents the Story that rings true when tested against reality, and it meets the need of people who are looking for a story with which to shape their view of themselves and their view of reality.<sup>62</sup>

Storytelling is very effective in engaging people with different worldviews.

Comparatively few people will reject the sharing of personal stories. The value of

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<sup>62</sup> Ford, *Power of Story*, 945-950, Kindle.

respect and acceptance in the post-modern world makes the sharing of personal stories acceptable. Christine Dillon asserts,

Many evangelistic methods, such as evangelistic sermons or courses that investigate Christianity, can only be done with people who already want to know more about the Bible or are at least comfortable enough to participate. Storying allows us to share the gospel with hearers who are anti-Christians or have not yet considered that Jesus could be relevant to their lives.<sup>63</sup>

Christ followers share the same language, symbols and system with people so that we can relate to each other easily with common stories. Storytelling engages the culture because stories of Christ followers share some common themes all people share.

At the same time, the faith stories of Christ followers invite and challenge the hearers to look at the similarities of stories in a different way. N. T. Wright wisely points out,

Stories are, actually, particularly good at modifying or subverting other stories and their worldviews. Where a head-on attack would certainly fail, the parable hides the wisdom of the serpent behind the innocence of the dove, gaining entrance and favor which can then be used to change assumptions which the hearer would otherwise keep hidden for safety.<sup>64</sup>

Christ followers can share God's Story and our own redemptive stories by living out our stories among neighbors and in our communities. At the same time, our neighbors can interact with their own stories. From the interactions through conversation and demonstration, people might slowly find their stories make sense in light of God's Story. The combination of conversation and demonstration are vital.

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<sup>63</sup> Christine Dillon, *Telling the Gospel through Story: Evangelism That Keeps Hearers Wanting More* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012), 24.

<sup>64</sup> N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and The People of God* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress, 1992). 38.

Leighton Ford states, “Instead of telling the gospel story by expounding and exegeting biblical texts in a sentence-by-sentence fashion, we must bring God's truth alive just as Jesus did, with stories, parables, word pictures, and vivid metaphors.”<sup>65</sup>

Storytelling does not only engage the not-yet believers, it forms the community and encourages Christ followers. True community in God requires that we participate in authentic life sharing with one another. Through storytelling, Christ followers can nurture intimate relationship with one another: stories draw us together. Christ followers can walk together through shared experiences, not only inviting but also challenging each other to live our lives for Christ through victories and defeats.

The book *Discovering Who We Together* asserts, “In order to experience intimate community in the biblical sense, we must learn to reveal ourselves to others. We need to honestly, freely and thoughtfully tell our stories.”<sup>66</sup> Reading and writing are one way communication. This is usually done alone, storytelling is interactive by nature, uniting story tellers and the hearers. Christine Dillon observes, “People who hear stories together are drawn closer together by a common experience – that is, via the hearing, discussion, and application of the stories to their lives.”<sup>67</sup>

As we share stories with each other, our level of trust and commitments to each other can grow. Don Everts and Doug Schuapp believe, “In this era of distrust, religion is

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<sup>65</sup> Ford, *Power of Story*, 1530-1533, Kindle.

<sup>66</sup> Center for Christian Leadership at Dallas Theological Seminary, *Discovering Who We Are Together: Community*. (Colorado Springs, Colorado: NavPress, 2004). 14.

<sup>67</sup> Dillon, *Telling the Gospel*, 27.

suspect, church is weird and Christians are hypocrites. Therefore, we are not to preach at people from on high but to come alongside, to shake hands and befriend them and to build trust.”<sup>68</sup> The interaction of grand biblical narrative, the gospel narrative, narratives of Christ followers, seekers, and non-seekers will help us remove the barriers of distrust.

Michael Frost observes, “Evangelism takes time and multiple engagements, it requires the not-yet believers to observe our lifestyle, see our demonstration of the reign of God, test our values, enjoy our hospitality.”<sup>69</sup> He further suggests, “Evangelism is like a meal. It can’t be microwaved. It can’t be take out.”<sup>70</sup> Scott McClellan boldly claims,

As we are transformed by God’s Story, we gather around it, and as we gather around God’s Story, we are transformed by it. We celebrate the Story and we mine it and we wrestle it. We tell it to each other and to our children and to our neighbors. The effect of this story community is a kind of slow, covert magic— a few years go by and you realize you can’t truly tell your own story without mentioning God and Jesus and all those people who walked with you. You realize that word— enjoined— has just happened somewhere along the way. You’re in community.<sup>71</sup>

Storytelling begins with discovery. Before Christ followers can learn to tell our stories to the people around us, we need to discover what God has done in our lives. During the discovery process, we can discern the blessings graciously bestowed on us by

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<sup>68</sup> Don Everts and Doug Schaupp, *I Once Was Lost: What Postmodern Skeptics Taught Us* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008), 30-31.

<sup>69</sup> Michael Frost, *The Road to Missional: Journey to the Center of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), 650-652, Kindle.

<sup>70</sup> Frost, *Road to Missional*, 654-655, Kindle.

<sup>71</sup> McClellan, *Tell Me a Story*, 126.

God. We can begin to learn to interpret life events in light of God's narrative, grace and blessings. The more we dig into the meaning of life in God, the more blessings we encounter.

The knowledge of God's blessings empowers our redemptive living for Christ as the response to the grace. The better we understand God's Story, the more we understand who we are. The more we understand our own story, the more we understand our journey's – past, present and future direction.<sup>72</sup> Leighton Ford has written,

Conversion, in the truest sense, is a collision of narratives. God's Story touches my story and your story, and a collision takes place. People encounter stories that call their own stories into question, and they are forced to ask, what if my story isn't the whole story? How should I respond? In the process of reconsidering their own lives, they become caught up in the Story of Jesus, and they are changed.<sup>73</sup>

Ford further argues,

In order to be witnesses for God, we first have to be transformed by God. The Story creates a Vision, and the Vision must produce Character. The Character we display to those around us is the clearest, cleanest, most convincing witness we have. When our Character is seen to be consistent with our Story, then our voice will be clear, and our Story will be heard.<sup>74</sup>

From my pastoral experience, discovering, discerning and telling stories to other people could be a transformational journey as both the hearers and story tellers are invited into the overarching narrative of God and to make sense everything in light of

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<sup>72</sup> McClellan, *Tell Me a Story*, 38.

<sup>73</sup> Ford, *Power of Story*, 144-147, Kindle.

<sup>74</sup> Ford, *Power of Story*, 1559-1561, Kindle.

God. The journey will be adventurous as temporal and eternal values clash.

Throughout that journey, we can be transformed to be like Christ in obedience.

### **Final Thoughts**

When Jesus was arrested and persecuted, the disciples scattered in fear. As they met the resurrected Lord Jesus, their immediate reaction was to worship Him, but Scripture tells us there were still those who doubted. Instead, He proclaimed all authority in heaven and earth had been given to Him and commissioned the disciples to make disciples and to obey all of the commands He had given them. This “Great Commission” was given when the disciples encountered the resurrected Lord in the context of worship. The encounter of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ is the beginning of the journey toward becoming “sent-out” people. The goal of discipleship is transformation and renewal by God’s grace, as well as obedience to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

In Acts 1, the disciples gathered together to meet the resurrected Jesus. They were still confused and asked when the kingdom of Israel would be restored? Jesus answered them His mission was not to restore the Kingdom of Israel. Jesus told them to be His witness and to tell His story and their stories in God at every corner of this world. During the journey of doubt and confusion, we encounter God in worship through His Story, and God sends us to witness Him through His Story and our stories to glorify Him.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PROJECT DESIGN AND OUTCOMES

#### Introduction

The thesis-project “Called to B.L.E.S.S.” was a five-week learning journey which was conducted in the Cantonese congregation in RHCCC. It seeks to validate the significance and impact of storytelling in worship gatherings and small groups in disciple making and missional living. This chapter first presents the project design of “Called to B.L.E.S.S.” (CTB) journey and how it will test the hypothesis. Then it presents how and when the thesis-project was actually carried out in RHCCC. Then it describes the research methodologies used to evaluate the effectiveness of the learning journey. Finally, it presents data gathered in the research and discusses the outcomes and significances of this learning journey.

#### Background of the “Called to B.L.E.S.S.” Learning Journey

The Holy Spirit led me and the Cantonese pastoral team toward this journey. I first learned the BLESS framework (Begin with Prayer, Listen, Eat, Serve, Story) through a visit to the Covenant Evangelical Free Church in Singapore in September, 2015. After the trip, my Senior Rev. Dr. Sam Chan gave me the book “*Discover Your Mission Now*”<sup>1</sup> by Dave Ferguson which uses the same BLESS framework. After prayerfully reading, I found that the BLESS

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<sup>1</sup> Dave Ferguson, *Discover Your Mission Now: 5 Simple Practices to Change Your World* (Chicago, IL: Community Christian Church, 2012).



framework - with some amendments to put more emphasis on worship, prayer and storytelling- would make it a good project to validate the hypothesis. I suggested this idea to the Senior Pastor, my supervisor in the Cantonese congregation and later to the Cantonese pastoral team. In November, 2015, after over a month of prayer and discernment, the Cantonese pastoral team decided we would have the “Called to B.L.E.S.S.” learning journey in the Cantonese congregation from April 2 to May 6, 2016. The adapted framework for this thesis-project is going to be, Begin with Worship and Prayer, Listen like Jesus, Eat Missionally, Serve like Jesus, Share God’s Story and Our Stories.

### **Called to B.L.E.S.S. Project Design**

The thesis-project was conducted in the Cantonese congregation of about 2,400 people as part of my ministry as the leader of the Evangelism (Communication) department in the Cantonese congregation. The research target of the thesis-project were young adults in the Cantonese congregation. As it is indicated earlier, we have found in the past few years that the didactic approach to discipleship has become less effective, particularly among Cantonese young adults. Therefore, we wanted to examine the influence of storytelling in discipleship.

The learning journey lasted five weeks but the participants were encouraged to continue to embrace the missional practices throughout the year. There were more than 200 small groups in the congregation joining the journey. Each member of the small group was

given a “Called to B.L.E.S.S.” workbook.<sup>2</sup> Each week began with worship and a sermon<sup>3</sup> based on the weekly featured article in the workbook. Each person went through the personal devotional readings<sup>4</sup> provided in the workbook matching the weekly themes. At the end of each week, the small groups met and reflected on the weekly sermon,<sup>5</sup> the featured article and the devotional readings. Each session ended with challenges to embrace God’s Mission, both individually and communally.

The first week, Begin with Worship and Prayer, emphasized knowing our identity in God and the blessings we receive from God through worship and prayer. It helped the congregation in discerning our “being.” By immersing ourselves in the love of God through worship and prayer, we can know more about God and His blessings. Intimate relationship and the knowledge of God were the key motivational and transformational factors for people to fulfill God’s Mission.

The following three weeks were the three missional practices of “missional living” which entails “doing.” These were the steps to connect with the people we discerned God wanted us to bless. The congregation learned from Jesus how to live missionally; “Listening like Jesus,” “Eating Missionally” and “Serving like Jesus.”

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix B “Called to B.L.E.S.S.” workbook in English and Appendix C in Chinese.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix A for weekly sermon outlines.

<sup>4</sup> Devotion themes and their passages can be found in Appendix D. The devotion readings and reflection materials can be found in the workbooks (Appendix B and C).

<sup>5</sup> Weekly Small Group Sermon Discussion Guideline can be found in Appendix E.

In the last week of the journey, the congregation was encouraged to share God's Story and our stories. The first step of sharing stories is to discover what God has done in our lives. In our journey, we used material from "Community: Discovering Who We are Together"<sup>6</sup> with permission from Dallas Theological Seminary.

### Testing the Hypothesis of this Thesis-Project

In order to test the hypothesis of the thesis-project, several elements in our gathered worship, our congregational prayer meetings, our personal quiet time, and our small group gatherings at CTB were either introduced or changed.

#### **Gathered worship**

For an attractional megachurch like RHCCC, it is impossible to transform the worship service radically into a more liturgical order to evoke within the congregation the Story of God. Therefore, some minor but significant changes were made during the journey to make God's Story and the stories of Christ followers more prominent. Also, some elements were changed to remind the congregation that the end of gathered worship calls us into mission.

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<sup>6</sup> Centre for Christian Leadership, *"Community: Discovering Who We Are Together"* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2004).

1) First Worship Service of the Journey

The sermon was an exegesis of Ephesians 1-4. Special emphasis was placed on Ephesians 1, outlining how worship tells God's Story, how worship is the response of blessings from the Triune God, and how we respond and embrace missions in prayer. The beginning of blessing others is worship and prayer.

2) Video Testimonies in Worship Services

In order to strengthen the storytelling element in worship during the five-week journey, a personal testimony video was played at the end of each sermon. These were the stories from the "Life Discovery" exercise.<sup>7</sup> Each video showed Christ followers sharing what God had done in their lives, reflections on what they had discovered about who God, and responses to God's calling to mission.<sup>8</sup>

3) Lord's Supper in the First Week and Fifth Week of the Journey

The Cantonese congregation observes the Lord's Supper once a month. Passages from 1 Corinthians 11:23-29 and 1 Corinthians 10:16:17 are read before partaking of the Lord's Supper. Pastors usually reminded the congregation of Jesus's sacrifice,<sup>9</sup> His imminent second

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<sup>7</sup> "Life Discovery" exercise can be found in pp. 44-53 of the English workbook in Appendix B and pp. 40-49 of the Chinese workbook in Appendix C.

<sup>8</sup> The video testimonies in Cantonese can be found in <http://rhccc.ca/calledtobless>.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:24-25.

coming,<sup>10</sup> the biblical attitude when partaking the elements,<sup>11</sup> and the unity of the congregation.<sup>12</sup> However, the Lord's Supper is not usually treated as a response to the proclaimed Word. Not only was the Supper placed before the preaching but the pastors of RHCCC do not emphasize the missional aspect of the Lord's Supper. The phrase, "You proclaim the Lord's death until he comes," with the focus of proclaiming as part of being sent out people, is often ignored.<sup>13</sup> During the journey, the Lord's Supper was moved after the sermon to become a response to the Word. Also, the focus of the Lord's Supper was about being sent out by Jesus Christ to proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

#### 4) Closing Exhortations

To emphasize the missional aspect of worship, the congregation was given weekly challenges at the end of each sermon. They were encouraged to pray fervently and to embrace the challenges. We intentionally changed the parting words to "You are now called to bless others." This helped worshipers connect the ending of their gathered worship with the beginning of the scattered worship of their daily lives.

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<sup>10</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:26.

<sup>11</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:27-29.

<sup>12</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:16-17.

<sup>13</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:26.

## **Prayer Meetings**

There are bi-weekly Wednesday prayer meetings for the congregation. To encourage the congregation to focus on prayer during the journey, the themes of the prayer meetings followed the theme of the weekly message. Partaking of the Lord's Supper in the prayer meetings is unusual in the RHCCC sub-culture. In order to emphasize the worship, prayer and sending nature of the Lord's Supper, the congregation partook Lord's Supper in prayer meetings.

## **Personal Quiet Time**

The first four weeks of devotional materials during the journey were stories from the four gospels. Devotionals guided participants to immerse themselves in the gospel stories, paying specific attention to Jesus' words and examples. The workbook helped the participants to explore; how to pray and worship like Jesus from the Gospel of Matthew, how to listen to people like Jesus from the Gospel of John, how to eat with a mission from the Gospel of Luke, and how to serve like Jesus from the Gospel of Mark.

## **Small Group Gatherings**

During the five-week journey, storytelling was a vital component in small group gatherings. Group members heard each other's life stories. At first, the weekly small group discussion was inspired by the personal video testimonies shared in worship. Then in the fifth week, a "Life Discovery" exercise helped participants discern God's ongoing work in their lives so they could share their discoveries with the group members.

The first step of the “Life Discovery” exercise was to divide life in chronological order from birth to the present. These divisions mark the various chapters of our stories. For each chapter, we discerned our heritage (the influences from our past that God has used to write our stories, to mold us, and to bring us where we are today, including family, geography, gifting, genetics, and temperament); heroes (the people who make a distinctly positive impression through words or actions); high points (the best and most fulfilling seasons or experiences); and hard times (relationships or seasons that were particularly difficult or painful). Through these discoveries we were asking “What do we learn about God?” and “What do we learn about ourselves?” The congregation knew tremendous blessings from God and discerned how to respond to the blessings in order to embrace the Mission of God. At the same time, we learned to trust God even when we did not totally understand our lives at the moment.

With the changes in gathered worship, congregational prayer meetings, personal quiet times, and small groups, we were immersed into God’s Story, discovering our stories in Him and sharing each other’s stories. All this helped change our attitude and behavior toward missional practices and our motivation to witness through storytelling.

## Project Execution

The “Called to B.L.E.S.S.” journey ran from April 2 – May 6, 2016. The following timeline (Figure 1) shows what happened in this journey.

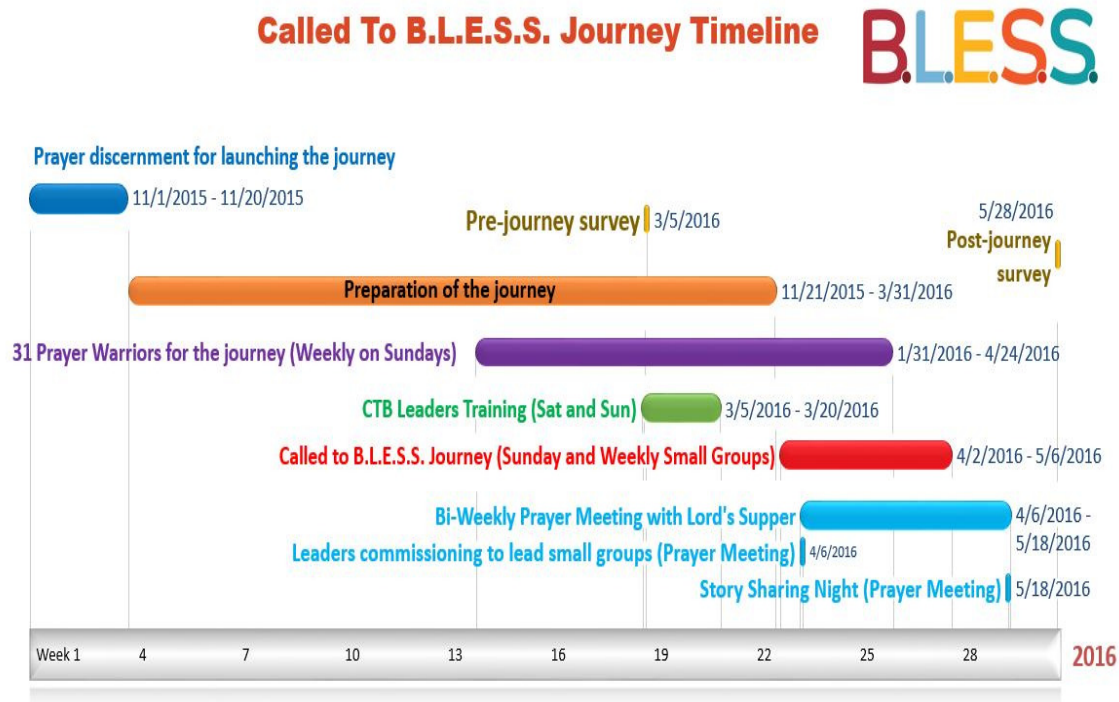


Figure 1: Called to B.L.E.S.S. Journey Timeline

Because of the unique bilingual context at RHCCC, the pastoral team decided to write our own workbook in both Chinese and English. The workbook was written collaboratively by Cantonese pastoral staff from different departments—Celebration, Cultivation, Caring and Communication—with help from the pastors of the English Congregation. Different volunteer teams – curriculum, translation, editorial, and graphic design – were involved in publishing the



workbook. It should be noted that this portion of the project took approximately five months, November 2015 to March 2016, to complete.

In order to enrich the small group experience during this journey, small group leader training was provided for the 250 leaders, fellowship committee members, and small group coaches. The objective of the training was to brief the leaders on the purpose of the journey, demonstrate how to use the workbook, model how to facilitate small group sermon discussion, and pre-study the “Life Discovery” exercise. It was crucial to have a pre-study of the “Life Discovery” exercise because this was totally new to the congregation. The training coached the leaders on how to do the exercises, helped them find the joy of discovering their personal life stories, and also helped them lead the small groups with enthusiasm. Training was divided into Saturday and Sunday sessions to accommodate 250 leaders.<sup>14</sup> The sessions were identical – each had three classes.

Because we wanted to emphasise the message that discipleship and missional living begins with worship and prayer, we began the journey with prayer. Thirty-one prayer warriors were recruited to pray inside the sanctuary every Sunday from January 31 to April 24, 2016. They prayed between our first and second worship gatherings—from 10:20 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. The goal was to prepare the hearts of the congregation to walk this journey together.<sup>15</sup> The Cantonese congregation had four congregational prayer meetings during the five-week journey. The prayer meeting on April 6 was the first. Small group leaders were

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<sup>14</sup> Dates of the training sessions are March 5/6, March 12/13, March 19/20, 2016.

<sup>15</sup> Prayer Items from Jan 31 to April 24, 2016 can be found in Appendix F.

invited to join the prayer meeting to pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit during the journey. At the end of the prayer meeting, the Lord's Supper was observed with emphasis on sending the leaders out to lead their small groups.

On May 4, the fifth week of the journey, we had video testimonies and live personal testimonies from brothers and sisters, telling how they discovered what God was doing in their lives and their responses. By way of conclusion, Lord's Supper was observed in the prayer meeting on May 18 to remind us of our mission to the world.<sup>16</sup>

In order to help brothers and sisters to embrace this journey, online resources such as the workbook, sermon outlines, sermon recordings, devotion materials, video testimonies, and wallpapers for phones, tablets and desktops were put on the website.<sup>17</sup> Since music has the intrinsic ability to enter our souls and appeal to the emotions, our Celebration department composed two theme songs to encourage people to join this journey.<sup>18</sup>

### **Research Methodology and Data Collection**

Survey research was conducted before and after the "Called to B.L.E.S.S." (CTB) journey in order to determine its impact on Cantonese speaking young people. The research examined both attitudes and behavioral changes with regard to worship and prayer, the

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<sup>16</sup> Prayer meetings schedule and themes during "Called to B.L.E.S.S." journey can be found in Appendix H.

<sup>17</sup> <http://rhccc.ca/calledtobless>.

<sup>18</sup> See Appendix G for the music score sheets (Chinese lyrics) with English translation.

impact of storytelling, as well as the extent to which missional practices were embraced before and after the journey.

Areas surveyed included:

- attitudes about and participation in worship and prayer
- attitudes about and attention to the needs of others
- attitudes about and engagement in sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ
- understanding of God's work in their lives
- attitudes about and actions taken toward sharing God's work through stories.

Participants in the survey research were Cantonese young adults currently attending the Cantonese young adult fellowship group in RHCCC. Their ages ranged from 25 to 45. Some were single, others were in dating relationships, and still others were married. None of the young adults whom we surveyed had children. Whoever was available after fellowship gatherings took the survey.

The pre-journey survey on February 27, 2016 was conducted online through Google forms.<sup>19</sup> The process was most familiar to young adults who are no strangers to taking online surveys. The survey was intentionally conducted prior to the small group leaders' training beginning March 5, 2016 so that the pre-journey survey results were not affected by the training. The post-CTB survey was taken May 28, 2016 after the last CTB prayer meeting. Four additional questions were asked in post-CTB survey to evaluate the respondent's commitment to attending the five topic-specific Cantonese worship services, four Cantonese prayer meetings, small group gatherings, and readings.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> See Appendix I for the pre-journey survey.

<sup>20</sup> See Appendix J for the additional questions for post journey survey.

In order to maintain the anonymity of the participants and at the same time to identify them for post-learning journey survey, a survey ID was assigned to each participant. Survey IDs handlers who had access to the names corresponding to the survey IDs had no access to the anonymous responses. The primary researcher (the author of this project) and the data analyst had access the anonymous responses, but not to the list of names. The ID handlers were responsible for maintaining survey IDs and names and identifying individuals who needed to take the post journey survey.

The survey was divided into four domains: worship, prayer, others' needs and story sharing. The final section of the survey gathered general demographic information about the participants for possible sub-group analyses. The survey asked questions on attitude as well as behavior. For example, an attitude question about worship read, "In the past two months, I *felt* that I was being sent out to live missionally after worship." A sample behavior question regarding prayer might read, "In the past two months, my prayers have focused more on praise and thanksgiving than on making requests." To better evaluate the impact of CTB journey, the questions were designed to measure responsiveness on a six-item scale: strongly disagree, disagree, somewhat disagree, somewhat agree, agree, and strongly agree. The scale was balanced on both sides with 3 "disagree" and 3 "agree" questions, creating an unbiased measurement. The following values were assigned to each item to analyze the responses using a numerical scale, with a higher score indicating better understanding after the CTB journey:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Somewhat Disagree
- 4 = Somewhat Agree
- 5 = Agree
- 6 = Strongly Agree

Participants were asked to rank their responses with the above ranking options. In order to make sure the participants read the questions carefully, one question was intentionally asked in a different direction. Instead of asking, “In the past two months, I sacrificed my time and money to serve the needs of other people,” the question in the survey was, “In the past two months, I have followed my daily routine and felt reluctant to sacrifice my time and money to serve the needs of other people.”

### **Hypothesis Testing**

The research question of primary interest was, “Is there a significant improvement (i.e., increase) in individual scores within the four domains. Higher scores indicate better understanding of living missionally for the Kingdom of God.

The null hypothesis of interest was  $H_0: \mu_d=0$  versus the alternative hypothesis  $H_a: \mu_d \neq 0$ , where  $\mu_d$  = mean difference between post-learning journey score and pre-learning journey score. That is, the null hypothesis was that the mean difference between paired observations (post-score minus pre-score) was zero. When the mean difference was zero, it implies there was no difference between the post-score and pre-score and therefore no improvement in the item scores in each domain.

Because of the paired design of the data, the value of interest was the change score on each question in the four domains, and we obtained it by taking the score difference between the post-score and pre-score. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, 95 percent confidence interval for the mean and range) would be presented for the difference in scores. Categorical analyses would also be performed to summarize the change score into three categories: (1) Better: post-score minus pre-score  $> 0$ ; (2) No change: Post-score minus pre-score  $= 0$ ; and (3) Worse: post-score minus pre-score  $< 0$ . Frequencies and percentages would be presented for the categorical variables. Subgroup analyses would also be performed by gender to understand the trend of change from baseline in the item scores for male and female participants. Similarly, subgroup analysis by years since accepting Christ ( $<10$  years vs.  $\geq 10$  years) would also be performed.

Because each participant was measured twice, a paired t-test was performed to test whether the null hypothesis of no difference in post-scores and pre-scores could be rejected. The paired t-test assumes that the score differences follows normal distribution. Although the paired t-test is fairly robust against departures from these assumptions (on a sample size of at least 30 subjects), the Wilcoxon signed-rank test (non-parametric test), an alternative approach that makes no assumptions about the distribution of the data, was also performed to test the null hypothesis, in case the normality assumption does not hold.

All comparisons using paired t-tests and Wilcoxon signed-rank tests were performed at the 2-sided 0.05 significance level for this research project unless otherwise specified. This p-value indicated, under an established threshold of significance (Type I error), the strength of the evidence against the null hypothesis. If the p-value based on the paired t-test, or Wilcoxon

signed-rank test was less than the prescribed alpha of 0.05, the null hypothesis of no mean difference would be rejected. Here statistical significance represents that the differences observed were unlikely to have happened by random chance, and were likely to represent change as result of the CTB journey. However, we should be cautious in interpreting the statistical significance as tests of statistical significance do not provide information about the effect size. In other words, outcomes with small p-values would not necessarily mean strong effect sizes. All statistical analyses were performed using the statistical software SAS® 9.2.

## **Research Results and Analyses**

### **Demographics Description**

Around sixty young adults joined the journey and thirty-two subjects participated in the both pre and post CTB learning journey survey.<sup>21</sup> Most of the participants were age 30-39 (81.3%, 26/32). Four participants (12.5%) were in age group of 20-29 and two participants were in age group of 40-49 (6.3%). The number of years as a Christian was mostly  $\geq 10$  years (68.8%, 22/32), followed by 8 to <10 years (15.6%, 5/32), 4 to <6 years (12.5%, 4/32), and 2 to < 4 years (3.1%, 1/32). Cantonese was the first language of most participants (93.1%, 30/32), followed by English and Mandarin (3.1, 1/32 each). Most participants speak fluent Cantonese

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<sup>21</sup> To ensure random sampling, no advance announcements were made for the pre and post CTB surveys before the fellowship meeting time. Whoever came to fellowship on the survey dates were invited to participate the surveys.

(90.6%, 29/32), followed by English (6.3%, 2/32) and Mandarin (3.1%, 1/32) (Appendix K, Table 3).

#### Participation

- Twenty-three subjects (71.9%, 23/32) attended all five Cantonese Worship Services during the “Called to B.L.E.S.S.” journey
- Twenty-two subjects (68.8%, 22/32) did not attend any of the four Cantonese prayer meetings
- Twenty-three subjects (71.9%, 23/32) participated in all small group gathering during the “Called to B.L.E.S.S.” journey
- Thirteen subjects (40.6%, 13/32) indicated they went through 81-100% of the workbook materials, ten subjects (31.3%, 10/32) went through 61-80%, five subjects (15.6%, 5/32) covered 41-60%, and 4 subjects (12.5%, 4/32) covered 40% or less of the workbook materials

#### Overall Results

Below is a summary of the “Called to B.L.E.S.S.” baseline (pre-) score, mean change in score (post- minus pre-) along with 95 percent confidence interval for the mean score change, minimum, maximum, and the p-values for the mean change in score based on paired t-test and Wilcoxon signed-rank test (Table 2). The survey questions can be found in Appendix I. The rows highlighted in dark grey are the areas with significant changes. Sub-group analyses by gender and years of accepting Christ could be found in Appendix L.



Table 2. Summary of Mean Score Change (Post-Score minus Pre-Score) on Questions in the “Called to B.L.E.S.S.” Questionnaire

	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]
	Pre-Score (SD <sup>22</sup> )	Mean score change (post-minus pre-) (SD)	95% CI for the mean score change	Min- Max chang e	p-value (Paired t-test)	p-value (Wilcoxon signed- rank test)
On Worship						
W1 (n=32)	4.5 (1.37)	0.47 (1.107)	0.07, 0.87	-2 – 4	0.0228	0.0303
W2 (n=32)	4.8 (1.27)	0.22 (1.431)	-0.30, 0.73	-5 – 3	0.3938	0.2599
W3 (n=32)	4.2 (1.31)	0.31 (1.203)	-0.13, 0.75	-2 – 3	0.1518	0.1402
W4 (n=32)	3.7 (1.33)	0.72 (1.114)	0.32, 1.12	-1 – 4	0.0010	0.0009
W5 (n=32)	4.2 (1.24)	0.25 (1.295)	-0.22, 0.72	-4 – 3	0.2833	0.1829
W6 (n=32)	4.3 (1.07)	-0.09 (1.279)	-0.55, 0.37	-3 – 2	0.6813	0.8874
On Prayer						
P1 (n=32)	5.2 (0.83)	-0.34 (1.004)	-0.71, 0.02	-3 – 2	0.0618	0.0859
P2 (n=32)	4.3 (1.16)	0.22 (1.408)	-0.29, 0.73	-3 – 3	0.3863	0.4107
P3 (n=32)	4.8 (0.99)	0.09 (0.893)	-0.23, 0.42	-2 – 1	0.5569	0.6931
P4 (n=32)	4.2 (1.18)	0.34 (1.382)	-0.15, 0.84	-3 – 4	0.1694	0.1693
P5 (n=32)	4.4 (0.67)	0.41 (1.012)	0.04, 0.77	-3 – 2	0.0302	0.0414
P6 (n=32)	4.4 (0.98)	0.03(1.092)	-0.36, 0.43	-3 – 2	0.8725	0.8357
P8 (n=10)	3.9 (1.45)	0.33 (1.225)	-0.61, 1.27	-2 – 2	0.4379	0.6250
On Others’ Need						

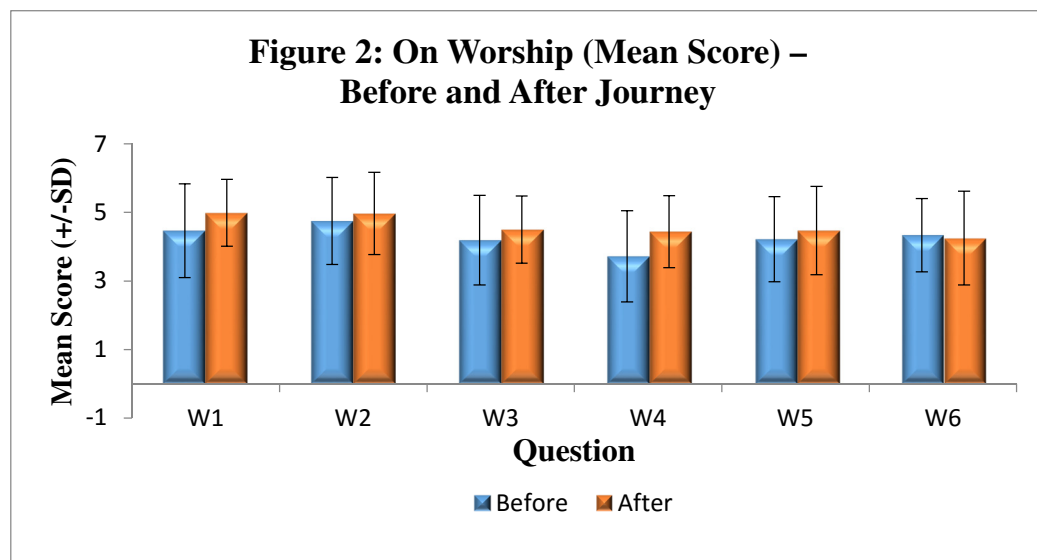
<sup>22</sup> SD – Standard Deviation

N1 (n=32)	4.3 (1.33)	0.22 (1.518)	-0.33, 0.77	-3 – 4	0.4213	0.5260
N2 (n=32)	4.4 (1.07)	0.22 (1.263)	-0.24, 0.67	-3 – 2	0.3349	0.2778
N3 (n=32)	3.8 (1.24)	0.59 (1.160)	0.18, 1.01	-2 – 3	0.0069	0.0083
N4 (n=32)	3.4 (0.98)	0.03 (1.282)	-0.43, 0.49	-2 – 3	0.8912	0.9482
N5 (n=32)	3.3 (1.44)	1.09 (1.552)	0.53, 1.65	-2 – 4	0.0004	0.0003
N6 (n=32)	2.8 (1.31)	0.72 (1.670)	0.12, 1.32	-2 – 4	0.0209	0.0185
N7 (n=32)	3.4 (1.08)	0.53 (1.294)	0.06, 1.00	-3 – 3	0.0270	0.0354
N8 (n=32)	3.1 (1.39)	0.97 (1.425)	0.45, 1.48	-2 – 5	0.0006	0.0004
On Stories Sharing						
S1 (n=32)	3.7 (1.45)	0.53 (1.481)	0.19, 1.31	-2 – 4	0.0511	0.0458
S2 (n=32)	4.5 (1.27)	0.19 (1.256)	-0.27, 0.64	-2 – 3	0.4047	0.4463
S3 (n=32)	4.3 (1.27)	0.09 (1.614)	-0.49, 0.68	-5 – 3	0.7446	0.5430
S4 (n=32)	4.7 (1.20)	0.41 (1.188)	-0.02, 0.83	-1 – 4	0.0621	0.0710
S5 (n=32)	4.0 (1.46)	0.72 (1.276)	0.26, 1.18	-1 – 3	0.0033	0.0027
S6 (n=32)	3.6 (1.39)	0 (1.586)	-0.57, 0.57	-5 – 3	1.0000	0.7865
<p><i>Source: Results from “Called to B.L.E.S.S.” Questionnaire</i></p> <p><i>Six-item scale: 1=Strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=Somewhat disagree, 4=Somewhat agree, 5=Agree, and 6=Strongly agree.</i></p> <p><i>Min=minimum, Max=maximum</i></p> <p><i>The rows highlighted in dark grey are the areas with significant changes.</i></p>						

## On Worship

Of the thirty-two young adult participants, twenty-nine usually attend Cantonese-language worship, one attends English-language worship, and two attended another church in

the past two months. Figure 2 illustrates the mean scores with Standard Deviations (SD) for all questions on worship. In Table 2 (column 1), the mean baseline score (pre-score) for each of the 6 questions in the On Worship domain was about 4.2-4.8, with exception on Question #4 which scored  $3.7 \pm 1.33$  (mean  $\pm$  SD).



Question #W4 (In the past two months, I felt being sent out to live missionally after partaking in the Holy Communion).

Among the questions in the domain on worship, #W4 had the highest mean score change with a baseline score of  $3.7 \pm 1.33$  and corresponding mean score change of  $0.72 \pm 1.114$ . The 3.7 baseline mean score average indicated some participants somewhat disagreed they were being sent to live missionally after partaking in the Holy Communion. After the journey, the mean score change was highly statistically significant ( $P=0.0009$ , Wilcoxon signed-rank test), indicating that there were substantial improvements in understanding to live missionally after partaking in the Holy Communion after the CTB learning journey.

Question #W1 (In the past two months, I felt that I went to church service primarily to respond to God's grace for me).

Although the mean baseline score was high ( $4.5 \pm 1.37$ ), there was noticeable improvement in mean score change of  $0.47 \pm 1.107$  (mean  $\pm$  SD) which was statistically significant ( $P=0.0303$ , Wilcoxon signed-rank test). The data suggests that the participants tended to have a deeper understanding of attending worship as primarily responding to God's grace after the CTB learning journey.

Question #W2, W3, W5, and W6

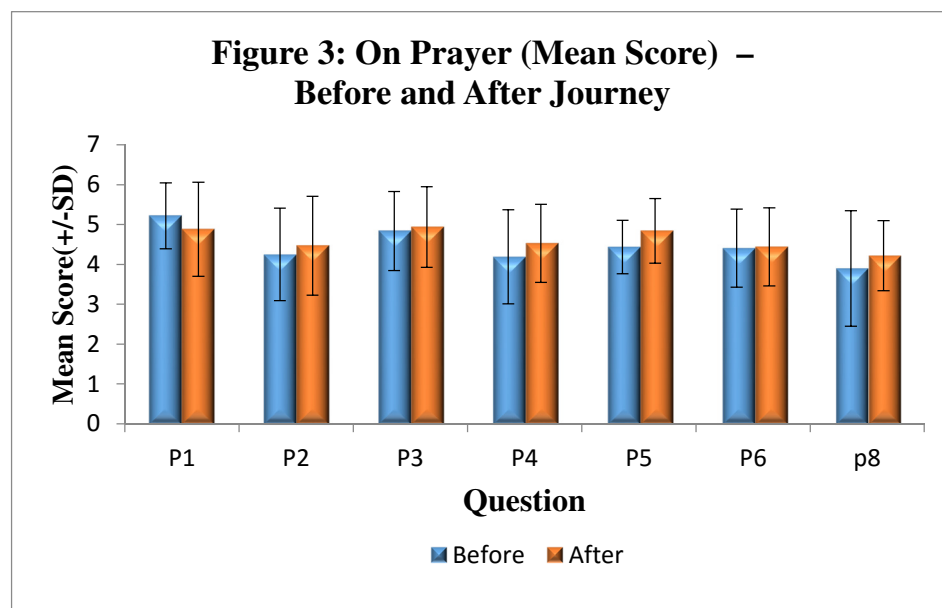
There were no statistically significant evidences to reject the null hypotheses (pre and post scores are different) for questions #W2, W3 and W5 (See p-values for Wilcoxon signed-rank test in Table 2). Before the journey, the participants already felt the blessings from God during worship (#W2, pre-score=4.8), they felt they are being sent out to live missionally after worship (#3, pre-score=4.2) and they felt that worship helped them live missinonally (#5, pre-score=4.2). The journey helped them in the above areas with mean score changes for #W2 (0.22), #W3 (0.31) and #W5 (0.25). However, the changes were not statistically significant. Before the journey, the participants already felt what they did daily was a form of worship (#W6, pre-score=4.3), it is noticed that there was a slight decrease of mean score average (-0.09). The journey made no impact on this area.

## Findings on Worship

After the journey, we could conclude that, 1) participants experienced being sent out to live missionally after partaking in Holy Communion; 2) they felt they went to worship primarily to respond to God's grace for them. The statistical significance in the above findings showed that it was likely to represent change as result of the journey. Overall, the results of p-values were consistent between the paired t-test and the Wilcoxon signed-rank test; both tests provided the same conclusion.

## On Prayer

The mean scores across the questions in this domain were relatively high (4.2-5.2) at baseline. Figure 3 illustrates the mean scores with Standard Deviations (SD) for all questions in domain on prayer. The positive score change after the CTB journey was relatively small (0.03 to 0.34); none of the score changes were statistically significant, except for Question #5.



Question #P5 (In the past two months, God has prompted me during my prayer time to serve the people around me).

The mean score was  $4.4 \pm 0.67$  with an increase in scores of  $0.41 \pm 1.012$ . The change in score was statistically significant ( $P=0.0414$ , Wilcoxon signed-rank test). The result indicated that the journey helped participants become more sensitive to God's calling to serve the people around time during prayer time.

Question #P7 (I have at least one prayer partner with whom I met regularly (e.g., once every two weeks) in the past two months (YES/NO)) and Question #P8 (If "Yes" to the previous question: In the past two months, the prayers of my prayer partner and me focused more on the needs of other people than on our own needs. If "No" to the previous question, choose "Not Applicable." ).

Before the CTB journey, ten of thirty-two participants (31.3%) had at least one prayer partner with whom they met regularly in the past two months. Of the ten participants, six (60.0%) agreed (one strongly agreed, two agreed, and three somewhat agreed), four (40.0%) disagreed (one strongly disagreed and three disagreed) that their prayers with the prayer partners focused on the needs of other people more than on their own needs. After the CTB journey, eighteen of thirty-two participants (56.3%) had at least one prayer partner (increase of 8 people [25%]) with whom they met regularly in the past two months. Of the eighteen participants, fifteen (83.3%) agreed (seven strongly agreed, eight agreed) and three (16.7%) disagreed (two disagreed and one somewhat disagreed) that the prayers of their prayer partner and theirs focused more on the needs of other people than on their own needs. The focus of their prayers were more on the needs of other people (from six people to fifteen people) rather than their own after the CTB journey.

Question #P1 (In the past two months, I have recognized God's blessings towards me during my prayer time.)

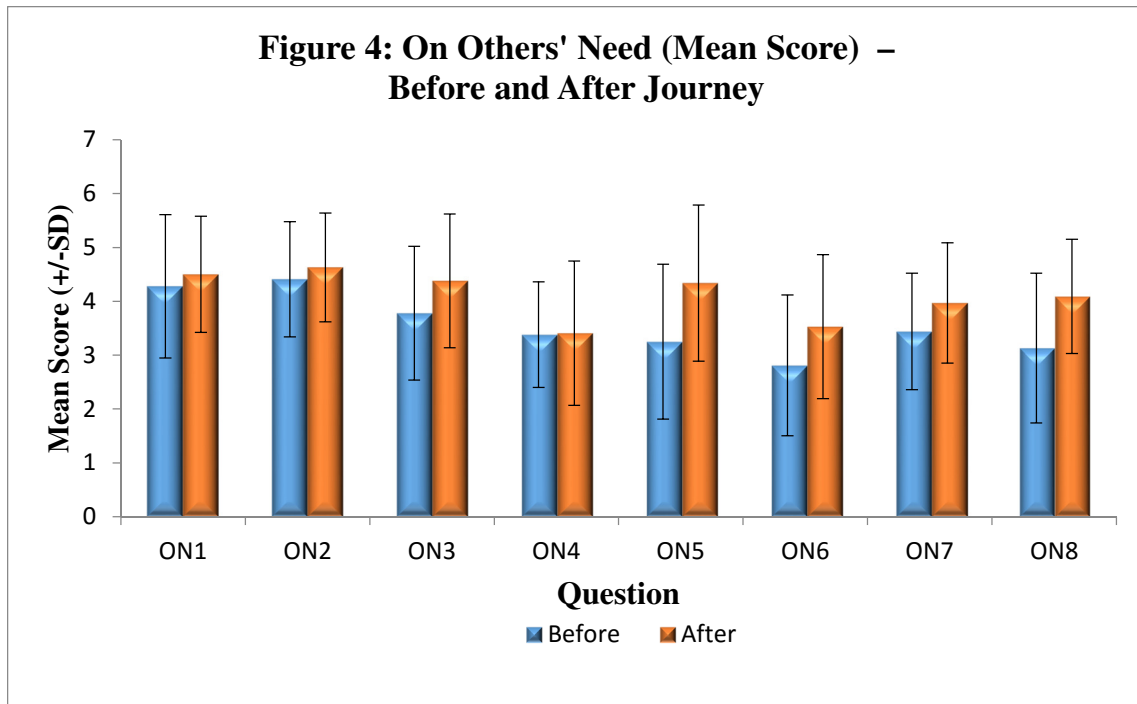
It has brought to our attention that the mean baseline score was  $5.2 \pm 0.83$ . With the highest mean baseline score, it was not surprising to note a very small change in mean score. In fact, there was a noticeable decrease in scores of  $-0.34 \pm 1.004$ , which was considered not statistically significant ( $P=0.0859$ , Wilcoxon signed-rank test). This negative change could be explained by the fact that most participants (53.1%, 17/32) marked no change in score after the CTB journey, 34.4% (11/32) indicated a worst post-score, and only 12.5% (4/32) marked a better post-score.

#### Findings on Prayer

There was not much improvement on prayer except some of the participants found their own prayer partners. This might due to the fact they did not participate enough in congregational prayer meetings (Twenty-two subjects (68.8%, 22/32) did not attend any of the four Cantonese prayer meetings). One good sign was that their prayer focus turned to the needs of others. It was not surprising that the prayer life of the participants remained unchanged as the journey only lasted five weeks. The transformation of prayer life needs a longer time to see visible results.

## On Others' Need

The mean baseline scores for each of the questions in this domain ranged from 2.8 to 4.4. Figure 4 illustrates the mean scores with Standard Deviations (SD) for all questions in this domain on others' need.



Question #N5 (In the past two months, I have intentionally eaten with new people (with whom I did not usually eat) to build relationships).

The mean baseline score was relatively low ( $3.3 \pm 1.44$ ) but the mean score change ( $1.09 \pm 1.552$ ) was substantial and highly statistically significant ( $P=0.0003$ , Wilcoxon signed-rank test), indicating that the participants were motivated to eat with people with whom they didn't usually eat to build relationships after the CTB journey,



Question #N6 (In the past two months, I have intentionally eaten with new people (with whom I did not usually eat) for the sake of discussing the Christian faith.)

The mean baseline score was the lowest ( $2.8 \pm 1.31$ ) among the questions in this domain but the mean score change was quite substantial ( $0.72 \pm 1.670$ ), which was statistically significant ( $P=0.0185$ , Wilcoxon signed-rank test).

From the results of #N5 and #N6, it is concluded that the CTB journey encouraged participants to reach out to people outside of their usual Christian circle and discuss their Christian faith with them over a meal. It is a way of living their everyday life as worship.

Question #N8 (In the past two months, my small group has intentionally connected people who did not know Christ to our small group gatherings).

The mean baseline score was relatively low ( $3.1 \pm 1.39$ ) but the mean change score was the second highest among the questions in this domain ( $0.97 \pm 1.425$ ), which were highly statistically significant ( $P=0.0004$ , Wilcoxon signed-rank test).

Question #N3 (In the past two months, I have felt compelled to intentionally build a personal relationship with someone who does not know Jesus Christ as his or her personal savior).

The mean baseline score was  $3.8 \pm 1.24$  with the corresponding mean score change of  $0.59 \pm 1.160$ , which was statistically significant ( $P=0.0083$ , Wilcoxon signed-rank test). From the results of #N3 and #N8, it is concluded that the participants showed willingness to intentionally build relationships at a personal and communal level with someone who do not know Christ after the CTB journey. The journey encouraged them to put effort in relational evangelism.

Question #N7 (In the past two months, I have broken my daily routine and sacrificed my time and money to serve the needs of other people).

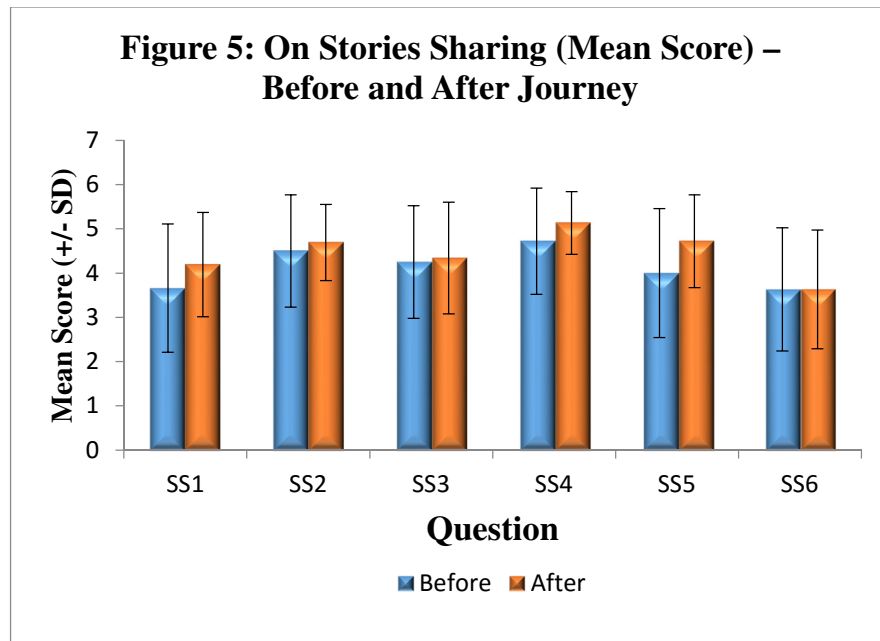
The mean baseline score was  $3.4 \pm 1.08$  with a mean score change of  $0.53 \pm 1.294$ , which was statistically significant ( $P=0.0354$ , Wilcoxon signed-rank test). The CTB journey not only changed the attitude of the participants about serving others, it also changed their behavior. The journey encouraged participants to break their daily routine and sacrifice their time and money to serve the needs of other people.

#### Findings on Others' Needs

Based on the overall results, there was sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis in favor of the alternative hypothesis that the difference of post-score and pre-score was not zero. It can be concluded that participants started to embrace a missional lifestyle in order to connect with people outside the usual fellowship group to engage their faith. Participants were compelled to build a personal relationship with others who do not know Christ. They were willing to break their daily routine to serve the needs of the people.

#### On Story Sharing

The mean baseline scores for each of the questions in this domain were generally higher (3.6-4.7). Figure 5 illustrates the mean scores with Standard Deviations (SD) for all questions in domain on sharing stories.



Question #S5 (In the past two months, I felt that I knew what God has done in the lives of my small group members).

The mean baseline score was  $4.0 \pm 1.46$  and the mean score change was the highest among the questions in this domain ( $0.72 \pm 1.276$ ), which was highly statistically significant ( $P=0.0027$ , Wilcoxon signed-rank test). The data suggests that in the past two months, the participants felt that they knew what God had done in the lives of the members of their small group. This also reflects the effectiveness of the CTB journey which encouraged authentic sharing among brothers and sisters in the small groups.

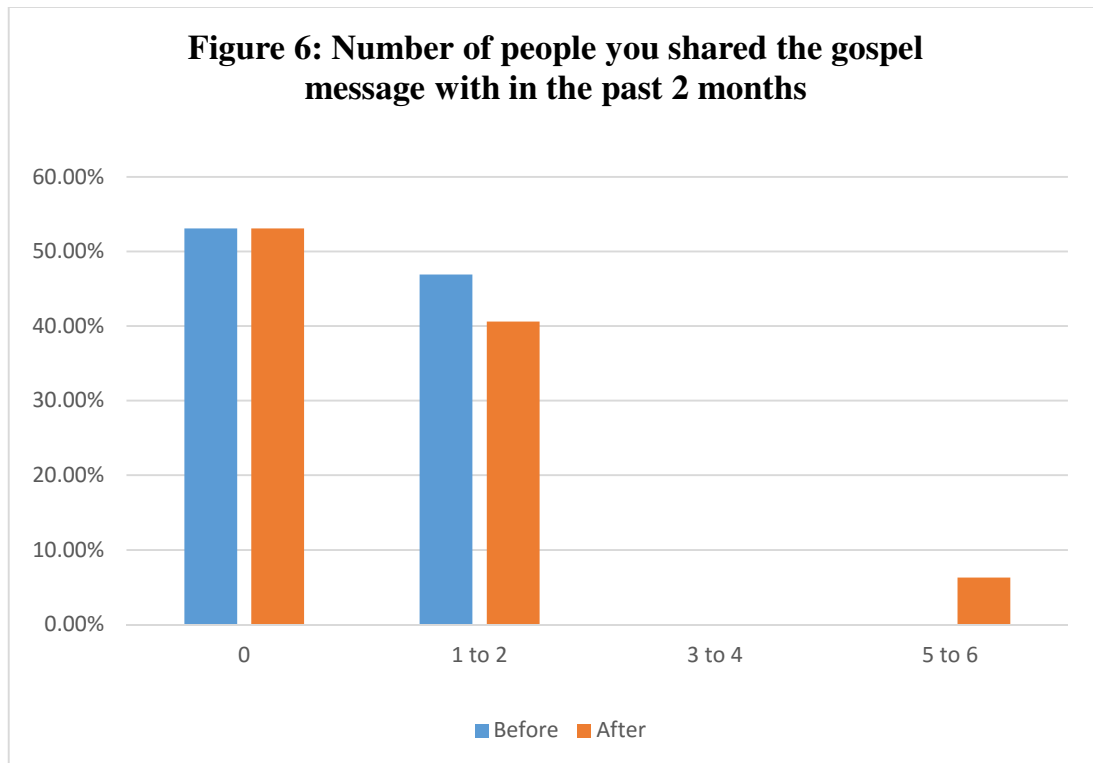
Question #S1 (In the past two months, I felt that I could easily tell people my life story in a precise and concise way).

The mean baseline score was  $3.7 \pm 1.45$  and the mean score change was the second highest among the questions in this domain ( $0.53 \pm 1.481$ ), which was also marginally

statistically significant ( $P=0.0458$ , Wilcoxon signed-rank test). The data suggests that in the past two months, participants felt they could easily tell people their life story in a precise way. This was indeed one of the objectives of the CTB learning journey—to encourage participants to write down their life stories.

Question #S7 (In the past two months, with how many people have you personally shared the gospel message of Jesus Christ?).

Prior to the CTB journey, 46.9% (15/32) of participants personally shared the gospel message of Jesus Christ with 1-2 people in the past two months, while 53.1% (17/32) did not share the gospel message of Jesus Christ during the same period (See Figure 6 for data summary). After the CTB journey, 50% of participants personally shared the gospel message of Jesus Christ with more than 1 person. (40.6% (13/32) with 1-2 people; and 9.4% (3/32) with 5-6 people).



Question #N8 (In the past two months, with how many people who do not know Christ have you personally shared what God has done in your life?).

Prior the CTB journey, 50.0% (16/32) of participants personally shared what God has done in their life with people who do not know Christ (40.6%(13/32) shared with 1-2 people; 6.3%(2/32) shared with 3-4 people; 3.1% (1/32) shared with 5-6 people). After the CTB journey, 53.1% (17/32) personally shared what God has done in their life with people who do not know Christ (46.9% (15/32) shared with 1-2 people; 6.3% (2/32) shared with 3-4 people).



### Findings on Story Sharing

It should be noticed that after the CTB journey, some participants were more willing to share the gospel message and their life stories to others. The change was a slight improvement. The story sharing component of the CTB journey helped build up the community as they shared their personal life stories within the small groups with reflection of what God has done in their lives. The stories shown in the worship service spurred on the sharing atmosphere within the community. With the help of the “Life Discovery” exercise, participants were able to share the stories with others in a precise way.

### Conclusion

The hypothesis of the thesis is that worship empowers discipleship and missional living through hearing, sharing, and remembering God’s Story and stories of disciples. The “Called

to B.L.E.S.S.” journey was designed to immerse participants in the story of God, in stories of other disciples in worship, in devotional readings, in prayer meetings, and in small groups. The journey lasted only five weeks. Some of the hopes for transformation did not take root yet especially in the area of prayer, however, the survey research results were encouraging in other areas:

- 1) Through the learning journey, participants began to understand more completely that worship is our response to the grace of God. They also began to grasp the idea that the end of the gathered worship is the beginning of scattered worship. They felt much stronger about being sent out by God to live for His mission in their daily lives—to glorify Him, especially after partaking of Holy Communion.
- 2) The story components in gathered worship and small groups aided the participants’ understanding of God’s work in their lives. Story sharing also helped create a sense of community as participants shared their stories in Christ with each other. In addition, storytelling helped them understand that their lives are not random but that God has entrusted each of them with a mission. The stories also empowered participants to pay attention to the needs of other people and, where possible, to serve them in those needs.
- 3) Finally, the journey encouraged participants to share the good news of Jesus Christ and their stories with others as part of their life's mission to glorify God in active response to the grace of God. This is their scattered worship.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### IMPLICATIONS

#### **Introduction**

The thesis-project “Called to B.L.E.S.S.” (CTB) journey made the Cantonese congregation in RHCCC realize that, in order to live missionally for God, we must recognize God's blessings. During the journey, they related God’s Story and their stories through worship, devotional readings, prayers and small groups. In doing so, they acknowledged God's blessings. Although we had seen some significant attitude and behavioral changes during and after the journey, this chapter discusses some limitations of this journey. It also discusses the implications of future Cantonese young adult ministry in RHCCC and Chinese immigrant churches in general in North America. Finally, it suggests the future research directions regarding storytelling in discipleship.

#### **Limitations of the “Called to B.L.E.S.S.” Journey**

The first major limitation of this thesis-project was the length of the journey. RHCCC is a church full of activities and programs. To get the congregation's full participation was a painstaking effort. In collaboration with other pastoral staff, five weeks were secured so that the small groups and weekend messages of the Cantonese congregation could focus on the themes of the journey. Five weeks sufficed in raising awareness of worship's importance as well as of discovering what God had done in the life of disciples. However, the journey was still considered too short to form new



spiritual and missional habits among the congregation members. The young adults began to embrace "missional eating" to reach out to their non-Christian friends and families. The focus of prayer became external. However, it was still challenging and out of the scope of this thesis-project to measure the sustainability of the habits in the long run.

The second major limitation relates to the participation of young adults. The journey implemented some changes in worship services, congregational prayer meetings, and small group gatherings. As the participation was voluntary, only a few young adults participated in all the events that were designed for this journey especially, the bi-weekly congregational prayer meetings on Wednesday nights. The low attendance at some of the meetings reduced the impact of the storytelling in this journey. They did not encounter the sending of small group leaders through the Lord's Supper, praying together, seeking God for transformation and the personal testimonies in the prayer meetings. It might be one of the reasons why there were no signs of transformation in prayer life.

The third was the limitation to the extent of changes to the liturgy in the worship services. Relatively minor changes were applied to the worship services like playing testimonial videos at the conclusion of the sermons, moving the Lord's Supper after sermons as the response of preached Word and modifying the worship service's parting commission so it is more mission-minded.

The fourth limitation owes itself to the fact that the thesis-project was run in the Cantonese congregation of 2,400 people as my responsibility as the leader of

Evangelism department. The training of the 250 small group leaders with all age ranges posed a challenge. The thesis-project's impact depended on the leading of small groups on sharing stories among the members. The young adults with limited life experiences needed more coaching time to encourage them to discover God's life stories in theirs.

Finally, the survey should have one control group that would not go through the CTB journey. We know that with the control group, we would have more confidence that the changes were solely due to the journey. However, in ministry reality, we could not isolate a particular group into the control group but allow all the young adults participating this journey as part of the ministry in RHCCC.

### **Storytelling in Discipleship for Young Adults in Purpose-Driven Church**

It is evident that hearing and sharing what God has done in the lives of young adults fosters missional living. However, it takes time to see the results from attitude changes to missional behavioral changes. In the near future, we will supplement discipleship with the use of stories to disciple young adults in RHCCC.

First, we will keep using the keyword "journey" to describe what the young adult groups are doing. In the past, RHCCC usually used words such as "programs" and "events" to refer to the fellowship activities. These words suggested the focus was what we were doing and what we could achieve.

The young adults in the discipleship group see themselves as a family going through the journey together rather than attending events and programs. As it is a journey, discovery will be the main theme of the young adult ministries. The goal of the

fellowship is not just teaching the way of Christ, but allowing the young adults to discover their life purposes in Christ through discipleship.

The vision statement of the young adult fellowship is “We are committed to providing a spiritual **home** for young adults, **growing together** in this important life stage, and **discovering** our life mission in Christ.” The metaphors of home and family are the emphases in the vision statement, growing together is what we strive for, and discovering our life mission together in Christ is the ultimate goal of the fellowship.

A purpose-driven missional church, such as RHCCC, strives for a balance of the five purposes to help disciples grow – To Consecrate, To Celebrate, To Cultivate, To Care and To Communicate. Below are the five vision statements of each department.

- We exist to CONSECRATE our lives together to Christ through submission to the lordship of Jesus Christ, through submission to His teaching, through the expression of His life in fellowship & Christian Community Building.
- We exist to CELEBRATE the life of God through awareness of and response to God’s presence, through communion and commitment to Jesus Christ, through oneness and praise in the Holy Spirit.
- We exist to CULTIVATE a life of Christ through the teaching of the Word of God and sharing life together.
- We exist to CARE about one another in Christ through sharing one another’s joy, growth, and needs, through recognition, development and use of gifts of the Spirit by every believer, through services and sacrifice to meet each other’s needs.
- We exist to COMMUNICATE Christ to the community and to help them to find their way back to God.

Reflecting on the results of the thesis-project and following the vision of raising next generation Cantonese young adults as leaders of RHCCC, the future direction of the Cantonese young adult ministries in the next five years is to strengthen the discipleship process by supplementing the didactic components of each purpose with narrative components. The main goal is to engage the Truth with stories so that the young adults can share life together grounded in the biblical grand narrative and the Word of God.

### Evangelism that Engages the Young Adults

In order to change the future landscape of young adult discipleship, RHCCC should begin with strategic change to the way share the gospel and the way we disciple the new believers. The first three to six months are the crucial window for new believers and the impact on their subsequent spiritual growth. The gospel presentation should move from anthropocentric to theocentric. The gospel presentation should show the grand biblical narrative rather than just individual salvation because the grand biblical narrative will introduce a life mission to the new believers. By doing this, the new believers start to understand they are no longer living for themselves but being empowered by God to fulfill His Mission in this world.

James Chuong points out that we should move from decision to transformation, individual to communal, after-life to mission life. This movement will present Jesus' compelling message more fully and relevantly. He believes the perspectives of decision, individual and after-life are not wrong, but they need to be balanced with the

perspectives of transformation, communal and mission life. James Choung's "The Big Story"<sup>1</sup> uses four circles to retell the gospel stories in four stages:

- a) *Designed for Good* - The world is designed for good. It is a wonderful place where everything was right. Creation was right with people, people were right with people and people were right with God.
- b) *Damaged by Evil* - The presence of sin and brokenness damaged our relationship in personal, relational and cosmic levels.
- c) *Restored for Better* – Jesus took all the damages, died on the cross, and came back to life to prove that evil does not have the final word. The whole act of Jesus brings God and His creation, including humanity, back into right relationship with each other
- d) *Sent Together to Heal* – We are commissioned, with the power of the Holy Spirit, to heal the planet.

The fourth stage of Choung's Big Story is the participation of each Christ follower in the Mission of God. Instead of asking, "do you want to have a right relationship with God by accepting Jesus as Savior and the LORD?" after presenting the third circle of "Restored for Better," Choung presents listeners the fourth circle "Sent together to Heal" and tells them Jesus wants us to join this resistance movement against evil, to go out and heal the world. The question becomes, "would you like to let Jesus be the leader of your life and join His movement to heal the planet?"

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<sup>1</sup>James Choung, *The Big Story – A Gospel Presentation*, June 2010, accessed March 03, 2014, <http://www.jameschoung.net/big-story-training.pdf>.

Choung's gospel narratives already have the mission in mind. Instead of making the decision to have a right relationship with God through trusting in Jesus Christ alone, Choung asks the people to make a decision to join the healing missional movement to heal the world. The end goal of Choung's gospel presentation is asking the people to join the Mission of God which is both cosmic and individual. In order to present the gospel holistically, we need to convey the full biblical Mission of God in terms of care for creation, redemptive and distinctive living (which covers the issues of all kinds of slavery and injustice), and proclamation of the Kingdom.

David Benson completes Chuong's gospel narrative with the fifth circle "Set Everything Right."<sup>2</sup> While Christ's followers are trying their best to heal this world, they still exist in a broken world strongly influenced by evil forces. The world will never be fully healed and they need to wait for the day Jesus returns to deal with all evil, rule fairly, and set everything right. At that time, death, pain and injustice will be no more – the world will be transformed, God will dwell with His people, and real peace will be established.

### Narrative Driven New Believer Discipleship

Numerous discipleship methods emphasize on what the believers should do in order to cooperate with the Holy Spirit: to grow spiritually. The classic form of new

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<sup>2</sup> Dave Benson, THE BIG STORY: FINDING YOUR PLACE IN GOD'S EPIC, (Bridgeman Baptist Community Church, 2013), [http://traverse.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/BigStory+slides\\_2013.08.12\\_BridgemanCC.pdf](http://traverse.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/BigStory+slides_2013.08.12_BridgemanCC.pdf), 11.

believers' discipleship is "The Wheel" from The Navigators,<sup>3</sup> and it was written in 1968.<sup>4</sup> Each part of "The Wheel" illustration represents a critical component of a vibrant Christian life—from the rim representing obedience to Christ, to the hub of Christ-centeredness, to each of the four spokes of witnessing, prayer, fellowship and the Word.<sup>5</sup> Some new believers are frustrated as they are incapable of fulfilling the obligations of these spiritual disciplines. As a result, some will retreat from the new believers' discipleship process. This phenomenon is magnified for young adults in the post-modern generation as they do not like to be told what to do. They like to discover the Truth by examining what Jesus did, and by observing how other mature believers live. Discipleship is not "taught" but "caught" especially for Millennials.

To encourage young adult new believers to start walking a new Christian faith journey, a personal and relational way is most effective. The discipler will walk with a new believer six to eight weeks to read the Bible and pray together. The role of the discipler should move from teaching to modelling and coaching. Therefore, storytelling plays a major role in new believers' discipleship for the young adults.

First, the sharing of stories between the disciplers and the new believers will create trust and enriches the coaching relationship. Second, a discipleship curriculum

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<sup>3</sup>"The Wheel - the Navigators," The Navigators, July 1, 2015, accessed August 4, 2016, <http://www.navigators.org/Tools/Newsletters/Featured%20Newsletters/Disciple/July%202015/July%202015/The%20Wheel>.

<sup>4</sup> "The Wheel®-History - the Navigators," The Navigators, January 31, 2006, accessed August 4, 2016, <http://www.navigators.org/Tools/Discipleship%20Resources/Tools/The%20Wheel-History..>

<sup>5</sup> The Navigators, "The Wheel".

like “The Wheel” uses scripture to instruct new believers in the crucial aspects of walking with God. For young adults, the discipleship curriculum could use stories in the gospels to supplement the more didactic passages of scripture, showing how Jesus worshiped and prayed, spent alone time with God, shared the good news to others, and connected others in community. The key is letting the young adults discover the importance of spiritual disciplines from the gospel stories.

During coaching, the disciplers share their stories, and the interaction of the Story of God, helping everyone discover this gracious journey together. By focusing on God's Story in the discipleship processes, both disciplers and new believers encounter God's grace: we are saved by grace and we are growing by grace. This personal discipleship does not replace the path to spiritual growth in small groups and Christian education. Personal, communal, and Christian education are the three parallel tracks for spiritual growth.

#### Young Adults Discipleship Retreat – “Who are Jesus’ Disciples?”

The immediate follow-up of this thesis-project is encouraging young adults to continue discovering their stories in God. The CTB journey had successfully encouraged young adults to discern what God had done in their lives through “Life Discovery” exercise. In the fifth week of the CTB journey, five marks of disciples were introduced but not emphasized<sup>6</sup> to help young adults to discover their daily journey with Christ. In

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<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 2.



order to help young adults continue to discover their daily discipleship journey, it is vital for them to know what Jesus expects them to be and that God is empowering them to fulfill this expectation.

The characteristics of the disciples are the goals they are going to pursue. Studying the stories where Jesus taught discipleship will help young adults to discover the meaning of being Jesus' disciples through the Bible narratives.

- Love Jesus Above All (Luke 14:25-35)
- Love and Obey the Word of God (John 8)
- Jesus is the Lord (Luke 9:23-27)
- Love One Another (John 13)
- Bear Fruits to Bless Others (John 15)

Through the immersion into the Bible narratives regarding discipleship and exploration of their life stories with themes such as obedience, triumph through faith, God's provision and protection, helping others as well as reconciliation with others, the young adults will engage the teachings of the Word on a deeper level. The extended time of sharing and praying together on the retreat will help them share freely what they have processed in depth.

### Storytelling in Young Adults Discipleship Group

After the CTB journey in May 2016, some changes were already made in the young adult discipleship group and further changes are pending. The changes focus on three aspects – God's Kingdom, God's characters and God's way of living. The group began to study the Kingdom and it stimulated our imagination toward the Kingdom of God. It helped the young adults to grasp the essentials to the Kingdom of God which are

the keys of transformation. Below were parables the young adult group studied from May to November 2016.

- The Friend at Midnight (Luke 11:5-13)
- The Wheats and the Weeds (Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43)
- The Unmerciful Servant (Matthew 18:21 - 35)
- The Shrewd Manager (Luke 16:1-13)
- Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13)
- The Wedding Banquet and the Feast (Matt 22:1-14)
- The Vineyard Workers (Matthew 20: 1-16)

In this social media generation, words become less commonly used. Storytelling and communicating between the young adults using pictures, Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook become very common. Therefore, a workshop that discovers God's characters through pictures will be provided to the young adults to tell their stories in God and discover God. The workshop is more artistic in nature and supposedly supplements but does not replace learning about God's characters through other means.

Sunday classes before worship time have become less popular for young adults. They do not want to wake up that early, and the teaching format was monologue as opposed to interactive dialogue. Essentially, it is spoon-feeding. This format had not changed much for more than a decade. Since eating is their socializing event and the young adults are more open to sharing in a lunch setting, we plan to move the teaching component of the young adult discipleship group into "lunch and learn" after Sunday worship service. The concept involves covering the essentials of the discipleship in the

“lunch and learn” setting. The tentative material used will be Discipleship Essentials by Greg Oden.<sup>7</sup>

Discovering life purpose is critical for young adults who are at their crossroads. Therefore, the young adults' group will discover their S.H.A.P.E.<sup>8</sup> together. Through the discovery of their Spiritual Gifts, Hearts (passion), Abilities, Personalities and Experiences; they find their own uniqueness in God.

Prayer is a crucial component of storytelling in discipleship as the young adults encounter God through worship and prayer. We would like to turn our prayer gatherings from focusing on the execution of the program to dwelling in the presence of God through worship and prayer. Some prayer partner groups were already formed during the CTB journey, but it did not become the culture of the young adults groups yet. Therefore, we continue to encourage the young adults to form prayer partners so that they can share their life stories and be accountable to one another. The young adult prayer should shift from focusing on prayer items to the grace of God. Previously, the young adult prayer night focused on the emotionally stirring worship songs and the prayer items to intercede. The young adult prayer night should be worship-based prayer. This approach to prayer always begins with a focus on biblical, Spirit-

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<sup>7</sup> Greg Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> Eric Ree, *S.H.A.P.E.: Finding and Fulfilling Your Unique Purpose for Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006).

empowered worship. Worship-based prayer seeks the face of God before the hand of God. It focuses on God rather than the prayer requests.<sup>9</sup>

The prayer should put more emphasis on Scripture reading and particularly on the Psalms and the Gospels. The reading will help the young adults to comprehend His grace through His Story and the promises of God in prayers. Moreover, the Lord's Supper should be observed more often in the young adult prayer night because it helps the young adults to remember God's grace and His mission. Testimonies will be the core element of the young adults' worship. Personal stories in God remind the young adults that they are part of God's grand narrative, and hence, should encourage one another to walk with God.

Finally, we continually encourage the young adults to embrace the movement called "Turns every conversation into a prayer" at the end of the discipleship group time. The young adults love to hang out to chat at the end of the gathering. Often, they share their daily lives with each other. This movement encourages them not to end a conversation by just listening, but in prayer to trust in God in everyday life.

### Discipleship through Mission

Based on their research in various churches, Eric Geiger, Michael Kelley and Philip Nation believe there is Transformational Sweet Spot (TSS) for each disciple. They found that transformation happens where at the intersection of truth, given by the healthy

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<sup>9</sup> Daniel Henderson, *Transforming Prayer – How Everything Changes When You Seek God's Face* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 2011), 27.

leaders, when someone is in a vulnerable posture. (Figure 8)<sup>10</sup> One of the vulnerable postures is the outward posture.

Instead of focusing on ourselves, as disciples we focus on the people who need the gospel. Disciples assume the offensive as ambassadors of Jesus Christ. The more we focus on individuals who need the gospel, the more we need to focus on Jesus Christ who is the One who can take care of the needs of everyone. Hence, disciples who are in the outward posture of practicing justice and mercy will worship Jesus and pray to Him continuously.

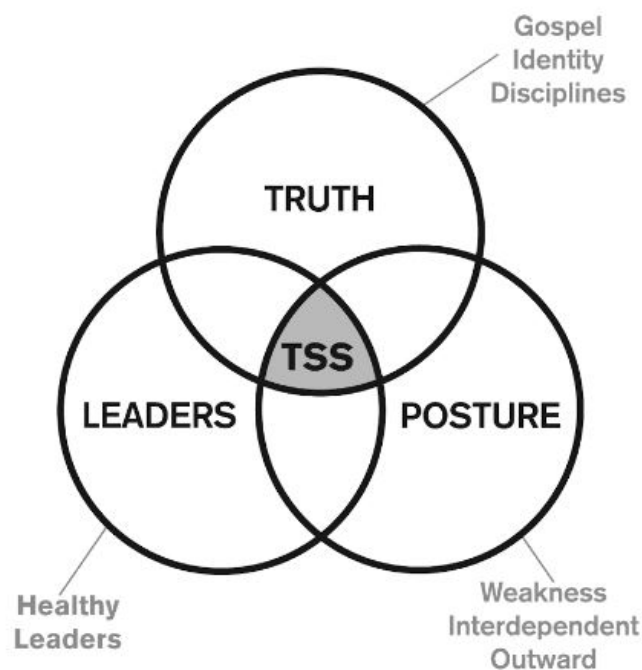


Figure 8. Transformation Sweet Spot

<sup>10</sup> Eric Geiger, Michael Kelley and Philip Nation, *Transformational Discipleship – How People Really Grow* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 2012), 61.

Short-term overseas mission and local community outreach are some of the ways to move young adults into a more outward posture. Participation in these activities together with learning the truth and with coaching by leaders, increases the chances that transformation will be more likely to occur.

### **Possible Topics for Future Research**

There are several topics to be considered for further research. The “Called to B.L.E.S.S.” journey can be run in a condensed three-day retreat format for the young adults. Research should focus on how the changes in the order of worship, the immersion of prayer and the introduction and the practice of ‘Life Discovery’ exercises will help young adults to find their identity and mission in Christ.

Another research topic could be the impact of narrative evangelism to tell God’s Story and the shift of the focus of evangelistic effort from decision to transformation, individual to communal, after-life to mission life. A survey could be made of the attitudes of young adult new believers toward living a missional life, the meaning of salvation to them and the importance of joining the faith community after receiving Christ as Lord.

Further research could also be pursued on the impact on young adults of adding narrative Bible study to the personal discipleship of new believers. The research should compare the differences between the traditional new believers’ discipleship and the one with narrative Bible studies. The ongoing research should measure some key markers of spiritual growth such as their habits of prayer, Bible reading, sharing their

stories in Christ, their missional lifestyles, their participation of young adults group and Sunday classes as well as their decisions to be baptized.

### **Conclusion**

The hypothesis of the thesis is that worship empowers discipleship through hearing, sharing, and remembering God's Story, and encourages discipleship as God's Story and our stories combine to lead seekers and Christ followers alike to a deeper worship of God. This thesis-project "Called to B.L.E.S.S." sought to validate the use of narratives in gathered worship, congregational prayer meetings, and small groups to empower and transform the missional living of the disciples. Throughout this journey, lives were transformed through God's Story and the stories of disciples. Through stories people not only encouraged one another to continue to walk the journey with Christ, but also deepened the community as we shared common faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and were aware of their place in God's grand narrative.

Transformation does not happen when only our minds are nourished; it happens when our hearts are changed. Stories are a powerful way to engage our hearts. When disciples begin to align our stories to the Story of God, our hearts and minds align and hence, transformation happens. The Story of God gives us the hope of a promised future as our destination is secured in Jesus Christ. This hope propels us to walk this journey with confidence. As God is faithful to His people, the stories of disciples are the cloud of witnesses which remind us to be faithful and to persevere through the trials and tribulations.

The end goal of transformation is to worship God. The ultimate goal of worship is not transformation, but the celebration of Christ for who He is and what He has done. Worship is the place where God is speaking to us and showing us who He is, and where we respond to all God shows us. Gathered worshipers experience the grace and love of God through the re-telling of the redemptive events and redemptive living of the people of God. Our existence is to celebrate Christ and glorify Him in gathered and scattered worship.

### **Final Thoughts**

Stories are indeed powerful. Throughout this journey from inception, to planning, to execution, I experienced the leading of the Holy Spirit through good times and bad times. This thesis-project was a huge project and involved many people from different congregations in my church. I would not have thought that thesis-project would be that large. I believe there was no way it could be done if God was not leading and sustaining it. The journey, indeed, was a leadership learning journey to me. God used this thesis-project to mold me to be a more godly and humble servant to lead many teams across congregations. I saw God's faithfulness and His grace and His mercy throughout the journey. May all glory be to God.



## APPENDIX A

### CALLED TO B.L.E.S.S. SERIES SERMON OUTLINES

Topic: Called To B.L.E.S.S. (1): Blessings Begin with Worship and Prayer





Scripture: Ephesians 1:3-6; 3:12-4:1

Speaker: Rev. Julian Wong

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#### Introduction:

“Called to B.L.E.S.S.” is a five-week learning journey. The goal of this journey is to motivate brothers and sisters to bless the people around us. As we respond to God's blessings, we embrace His calling to bless others by His grace and power. I trust that this journey will help us to know more about Jesus and His wonderful works in us. I believe God will show who we should bless in the coming months through our prayers.

Called to B.L.E.S.S. Journey: The 5 Essentials		
 Begin with Worship and Prayer		
 Listen Like Jesus	 Eat Missionally	 Serve Like Jesus
 Share God's Story and Our Stories		

#### 1. Gathered Worship encourages us to bless others (Eph 1:3-14)

*From Blessings to Worship* (Eph 1:3)

-  We are Privileged (Eph 1:4-6a)
-  We are Precious (Eph 1:7-8)
-  We Live with Purpose (Eph 1:9-12)
-  We are Protected (Eph 1:13-14)

The beginning of blessing others is Worship, not Work.

We need to recognize our spiritual blessings from God in order to fight the spiritual battles with God and for God (Eph 6:10-11).

## **2. Receive Calling to bless others through prayer response (Eph 1:17-23; 3:14-21)**

*From Worship to Transformational Prayer*

Pray to know God more (Eph 1:17-19)

🙏 Pray for the readiness of our hearts to receive God's calling (Eph 3:12-20)

- Pray for no more fear (Eph 3:12-13)
- Pray for the filling of love and grace (Eph 3:14-20)

🙏 Pray to seek God's calling (Eph 3:14-20)

## **3. Scattered Worship is the way of life to bless others (Eph 4:1-6:9)**

*From Transformation Prayer to Missional Living*

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. (Eph 4:1)

We are called to bless others to glorify God through missional living. [Rom 12:1-2]

Our lives glorify God: We continue to learn, to live, to do, and to proclaim. [Phi 3:13-14]

The outline of the rest of Chapter 4 till the end of the Ephesians shows us how to live missionally:

🙏 Preserve the unity of the Spirit within the community of Christ (4:2-16)

🙏 Live a life as a new man in Christ (4:17-6:9)

- vi. Live a life as a new man in the image of God (4:17-32)
- vii. Live as children of Love (5:1-7)
- viii. Live as children of Light (5:8-14)
- ix. Live as people of wisdom with thanksgiving (5:15-20)
- x. Live missionally by submitting to one another (5:21-6:9)
  - Radical spousal (5:22-33), parent-children (6:1-4) and master-slave (6:5-9) relationships.

**Conclusion:** We gather in order to scatter and we scatter in order to gather. No matter what, we worship.

**Weekly Challenges:**

**BLESS** Come to worship service with reverence and the expectation to encounter God.

**BLESS** Write down a list of people you wish to bless this year.

**BLESS** Form a prayer partner group of 3 to 4 brothers and sisters to pray together and hold each other accountable to obedience.

Topic: Called To B.L.E.S.S. (2): Listen Like Jesus

Scripture: Mark 10:46-52

Speaker: Rev. Julian Wong

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## Introduction:

To answer before listening— that is folly and shame (Prov 18:13).

### 1. Everyone Longs for Love and Listening is a Display of Love

👉 *Poor listening rejects, good listening embraces. Poor listening diminishes the other person, while good listening invites them to exist, and to matter [Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (NY: Harper and Rows Publishers, 1954)].*

👉 My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry (James 1:19).

👉 *The first duty of love is to listen [Paul Tillich]*

👉 *Just as love to God begins with listening to His word, so the beginning of love for the brethren is learning to listen to them [Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*].*

### 2. Everyone Likes Gifts and Listening is a Gift of Grace

d) It is the grace of God that we live, therefore, we should give it to others.

This is what God the Lord says— the Creator of the heavens, who stretches them out, who spreads out the earth with all that springs from it, **who gives breath to its people**, and life to those who walk on it: (Isa 42:5)

e) *Listening is a gift. It is a gift from God to us that sparks intimacy, that helps us grow into servants and disciples, that promises constant learning and self-discovery, that helps us never lose the childlike gift of being surprised, and that assures us of guidance and the awareness of God's presence. It is a gift that God offers— in the staggering discovery that God actually listens to us— and it is a gift that we offer others, an open invitation to receive whatever they choose to share with us.*

[Adam S. McHugh, *The Listening Life: Embracing Attentiveness in a World of Distraction* (Downer Groves, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 2857-2861, Kindle.]

### **3. Everyone loves to be cared for and Listening calls for a humble heart**

All relationships are based on mutual submission:

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (Eph 5:21).

*Listening is not pushing our opinions and agendas into their hearts but accepting their invitation humbly into their hearts.*

Let us be a person of “Listen to” before “Listen for”

- 👂 Listen For – is to analyze and to deconstruct
- 👂 Listen To – is to embrace and to build up relationship

### **4. Everyone needs to listen to God before listening to others**

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me (John 10:27).

To listen to God, we have to be:

- 👂 Determined
- 👂 Disciplined
- 👂 Discerning

### **Conclusion:**

*Many people are looking for an ear that will listen. They do not find it among Christians, because these Christians are talking where they should be listening. But he who can no longer listen to his brother will soon be no longer listening to God either; he will be doing nothing but prattle in the presence of God too. [Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*].*

### **Weekly Challenges:**

- BLESS** Ask God to help you to listen and discover the needs of the people God has placed at your home, your work or school
- BLESS** Share your discoveries with your groups and families

Topic: Called To B.L.E.S.S. (3): Eat Missionally

Scripture: Matthew 9:9-13

Speaker: Rev. William Yip

---

### **Introduction:**

Eating is not only for sustaining life, but also is a way to live a missional life for God. People experienced the grace of God through Jesus when He ate with them.

- **The Mission of Jesus**

The phrase “the Son of Man came” appears in the Gospel of Matthew three times.

- 👉 Matthew 18:11 reads, “For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost” (NASB version) (See also Luke 19:10).
- 👉 Matthew 20:28 reads, “just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” (See also Mark 10:45).
- 👉 Matthew 11:19, “The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and ‘sinners’. But wisdom is proved right by her actions.”

Jesus said that the Son of Man came to eat and drink. One of Jesus’ missions on earth to eat and drink with people He met. Most of Jesus’ ministry on earth took place around the dining table when people were eating and drinking.

- **Jesus is the Missional Eater**

- 👉 Eating with others is a way to demonstrate and proclaim the gospel
- 👉 Matthew 9:9-13: By eating with Matthew, the tax collector, Jesus shows the meaning of missional eating

- **Missional Eating and Us**

*Consider how your meals express your vision for life. Think about who’s invited, how they’re served, what you hope to achieve, and the layout of your home. Do they express*

*the vision of the kingdom of God? [(Tim Chester, A Meal With Jesus: Discovering Grace, Community, and Mission around the Table (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011))]*

- 👉 The Dining Table is where Relationships are Built
- 👉 The Dining Table is where Barriers are Broken
- 👉 The Dining Table is where We Serve

- **Obstacle to Missional Eating**

- 👉 Hard to find who to bless
- 👉 Too busy and no time
- 👉 Uneasy at hospitality
- 👉 Not enough resources (cooking or time)

The motivation comes from trusting in the Lord

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight (Prov 3:5-6)

**Conclusion:**

- 👉 Eat Missionally and Ask God to use us to bless others
- 👉 Leave your comfort zone and discover your gifts
- 👉 Try one small step for a change
- 👉 Build a team to serve together in unity
- 👉 Root in worship and prayer to trust in the Lord

**Weekly Challenges:**

**BLESS** As a small group / individual, invite an unacquainted friend to dine together (preferably at home but is not mandatory)

**BLESS** Continue to seek God whom you are going to bless

Topic: Called To B.L.E.S.S. (4): Serve Like Jesus

Scripture: Mark 10:43-45

Speaker: Pastor Virginia Yong

---

### **Introduction:**

Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:43-45).

#### **1. See What Jesus Did (Mark 7:31-35)**

- 👂 Proximity (Mark 7:32)
- 👂 Perceptively (Mark 7:33)
- 👂 Personally (Mark 7:34)
- 👂 Powerfully (John 14:12)

#### **2. Feel What Jesus Felt (To Serve but not to be Served)**

- 👂 Serve sacrificially (Mark 10:43-45)
- 👂 Serve sincerely (John 13:12-15)
- 👂 Serve sustainably (Romans 12:11-12)

#### **3. Do what Jesus Asked**

- 👂 Humble ourselves (Phil 2:5-8)
- 👂 Total Surrender and Submit (Mark 15:25-39)
- 👂 Obey and Sacrifice (Mark 9:31, 34-35)

### **Conclusion:**

We need to see what Jesus did, feel what Jesus Felt and Do what Jesus asked. Bless others through God and ask the following questions:



- 🏆 What to do?
- 🏆 Where to do?
- 🏆 Why to do?
- 🏆 How to do?

### **Weekly Challenges:**

- BLESS** Serve (personally or small group) a not-yet believer and a brother/sister
- BLESS** Continue to seek God whom you are going to bless

Topic: Called To B.L.E.S.S. (5): Share God's Story and Our Stories

Scripture: Psalm 139:1-4

Speaker: Rev. Julian Wong

---

### **Introduction:**

The last essential of the "Called to B.L.E.S.S." journey is Share God's Story and Our Stories. We bless people through our listening, eating together and serving. However, the most important is to introduce God to our family and friends who do not know Christ.

1. **The Story of God's Redemptive Plan** (God is sovereign, He watches over our lives)
2. **The Story of Salvation through Grace** (God is Savior, He saves our lives)
3. **The Story of a Disciple's Life** (God is the Lord of Life, He guides our lives)

Five special qualities of a disciple of Jesus

- 🙌 Loves Jesus Above All (Luke 14:26)
- 🙌 Loves and Obey the Word of God (John 8:31)
- 🙌 Jesus is the Lord (Luke 9:23)
- 🙌 Loves One Another (John 13:35)
- 🙌 Blessed to Bless (John 15:5;8;16)

The Balance of Life Stories: Make sure we pay attention to each categories of life stories

Special Qualities of discipleship	Loves Jesus above all; Obeys the Word of God; Takes Jesus as Lord of my life.	Blessed by God (bear fruit).	Love each other; Bless others.
Types of Life Stories	Obey and follow; Worship and serve; Triumph through faith; Thirsty for God's Word.	Redemption through grace; God's provision; God's protection; God's strengthening; God's grace; Prayers answered.	<b><u>Blessing Others:</u></b> Gospel Sharing; Caring Prayers  <b><u>Helping others:</u></b> Forgive each other; Reconcile with others.

*Every moment of our lives is like a piece of puzzle. We might not understand the true meaning of it but we are part of God's wonderfully made huge puzzle. Every piece is crucial to this puzzle.*

<b>Seek our Life Stories:</b> God will use every second our lives to mold us to be His disciples.	Respond to our calling: God encourages us and calls us to share God's Story and Our Stories through the Lord's Supper
<b>Life Discovery Exercise</b> Use the 4H (Heritages, Heroes, High Points and Hard Times) to help you discovering your life stories in every stage of your life.	For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, <b><u>you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes</u></b> (1 Cor 11:26)

### Conclusion:

Seek and Share: But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15).

### Weekly Challenges:

**BLESS** Finished the "Life Discovery" Exercise

**BLESS** Pray God to empower you to honor your commitment

**BLESS** Share your life story discovery to a not-yet believer friend

## APPENDIX B

### CALLED TO B.L.E.S.S. WORKBOOK (ENGLISH)



# CALLLED TO B.L.E.S.S.

Begin  
with Worship  
& Prayer



Listen  
Like Jesus



Eat  
Missionally



Serve  
Like Jesus



Share  
God's and  
Our Stories



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## Foreword

At RHCCC, we aspire to help fellow believers understand that to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior is to become His disciple, and to follow Him and serve Him for life. A disciple's life is to:

1. Celebrate the grace of God in our personal lives and through our church.	Celebrate our Relationship with God
2. Connect with brothers and sisters to grow in the Lord, foster life-long friendship, and go through life together in one heart and one mind.	Connect our Relationship with the Church
3. Contribute one's talents, time and money to bless others, and through the power of the gospel to help others return to God.	Contribute to bless our Relationship with the world

The "Called to B.L.E.S.S." journey is to encourage brothers and sisters to live out these aspects of a disciple's life. It also helps us discover the opportunity that God has already prepared for us to serve others. Through prayer, waiting on God, establishing relationship with Him, and sharing the stories of our miraculous lives, we receive blessings from Christ Jesus together with our friends. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Ac 20:35) Let us come forward to give blessings to others through the gospel!

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## Acknowledgements

How gracious is God to have called us to serve Him as a body in Christ! We have truly experienced, first hand, His amazing guidance in inspiring and unifying our “Called to B.L.E.S.S.” team to accomplish this good work He has set out for us. The initial vision birthed out of our church’s visitation in Singapore, which further evolved as we read the “Discover Your Mission Now” book, introduced by Rev. Sam Chan. After seeking for the Lord’s affirmation, our RHCCC Communication, Cultivation, Caring and Celebration departments worked together to prepare for this journey. We hope this journey will help our brothers and sisters to discover our roles in living missionally for Jesus and, in doing so, be transformed to become more like Jesus.

We would like to acknowledge the support of two external resources. Our Called to B.L.E.S.S. framework is adapted from the “Discover Your Mission Now” book written by Pastor Dave Ferguson, who is the lead pastor of the Community Christian Church in Chicago, IL. We thank him for his generosity in granting RHCCC the rights to adapt his book for our journey. we would also like to thank the Centre for Christian Leadership at the Dallas Theological Seminary for granting us their permission to use the “Community – Discovering Who We Are Together” book’s “Life Story” framework for our “Life Discovery” exercise.

It would not have been possible to publish this “Called to B.L.E.S.S.” workbook without the Holy Spirit carrying out His good work to completion. We would also like to appreciate members of the following teams who have believed and supported us unceasingly in this vision. A special thank you goes to:

- our pastors for your valuable contributions to the content and revision of this workbook, as well as for preaching this sermon series
- our curriculum team for developing the bible study and “Life Discovery” Exercise materials to teach us to how to embrace the mission of God
- our translation and editorial teams for your devotion to meeting the tight timeline
- our publishing team for putting together this beautiful workbook
- our Celebration department for composing a great theme song to accompany us on this journey
- our promotion and decoration team for your creative ideas in rallying our brothers and sisters to get excited about this journey
- our prayer team for your unceasing prayer support throughout this journey. We believe that nothing is possible without prayers!

Last, but not least, may all glories go to our Heavenly Father who has graciously called us together to serve Him and to experience Him in a deeper way! It is our sincere prayer that He will speak to each of you personally to bring about transformations that are beyond our imaginations!



---

## Introduction

God has bestowed His children with the ultimate blessing of His salvation. He has also commissioned us to play an active role in extending His blessing to others. How can we better prepare ourselves to step up to this calling? RHCCC is excited to invite you to join us on a 5-week journey named “Called to B.L.E.S.S.”. We are convinced that life’s most beautiful blessing rests in knowing our Lord Jesus Christ! May we be mobilized to share His gospel beyond our church building into our everyday community! Together, we will explore, learn and practice 5 key essentials that can help us play a more active role in mission. May God use this journey to renew our minds and mold our lifestyles into ones that delight in sharing His eternal blessings to the people around us!

The acronym B.L.E.S.S. represents the theme of each week in this journey.

**Begin with Worship and Prayer**

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**Listen**

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**Eat Missionally**

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**Serve**

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**Share God’s stories and our stories**

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Our journey begins with worship and prayer. We pave the way to bless by listening, eating missionally, and serving others. Finally, through “Life Discovery” Exercise, we discover how God works and blesses our lives. This journey aims to draw us closer to God and prepare us to share His stories and our stories with the people around us.

Through our Sunday sermons, small group discussions, prayers, featured articles, devotional passages, and “Life Discovery” Exercise, we will encourage one another to live out a missional lifestyle. Each week’s devotional passages will further develop the theme of that week’s sermon message. Matthew’s devotional passages will guide us to reflect on worship and prayer, John’s devotional passages on listening, Luke’s devotional passages on eating missionally, and Mark’s devotional passages on serving.

The following points summarize the objectives of this Called to B.L.E.S.S. journey:

1. Once we are aware of how immensely God has blessed us, we will have the desire to bless others. As we grow in our intimacy with God through worship and prayer, He will bring the lost souls to us.
2. We can play a more active role than just bringing seekers to our church’s evangelistic meetings. We can live out a missional lifestyle that enables us to readily share the gospel at our workplace, our family, our school and our community.
3. Keep on discovering God’s daily blessings in our lives and never stop sharing His stories and our stories with the people around us.
4. Keep on practicing these 5 key essentials: worship and prayer, listen, eat missionally, serve, and share God’s stories and our stories.

---

## Small Group Covenant

My Name:

My Group Leader's Name:

Our group exists to bring each member to spiritual maturity through the following attributes:

**Celebration:** we will commit to celebrate this journey of discipleship together by devoting our praises, our thanksgivings, and our prayers to God. Each member is committed to make time to attend worship services, read the Scripture, featured articles and devotional materials, make our own journal notes and complete the "Life Discovery" Exercise.

**Connection:** we will commit to develop an authentic relationship with other members in an atmosphere of acceptance and accountability. We will learn to respect and listen to each other's story with confidentiality. We are committed to find a prayer partner to support and encourage each other throughout this journey.

**Contribution:** we will commit to use our spiritual gifts to build up the body of Christ and to bless others.

We agree to be faithful in our attendance over the next 5 weeks and to call our leader if we are unable to attend. By faith, we commit to discover God's work in our lives. By grace, we will continue to bless others by sharing God's stories and our stories with them.

Member's Signature:

Witness' Signature:

Leader's Signature:

---

## Getting the Most from this Workbook

This workbook has 5 weeks' worth of materials to accompany your weekly "Called to B.L.E.S.S." journey. You can begin each week by reading the featured article followed by the 5 daily devotions (Monday-Friday). We have also included 2 sets of bible study materials in this workbook.

We encourage you to walk through this journey with a small group of brothers and sisters. Each week, meet with your small group to share and reflect on the weekly sermon message, the featured article and the devotional readings. End each session with the weekly challenges to encourage each other to embrace God's mission, both individually and collectively. If time permits, discuss the 2 bible study materials during the sessions, otherwise they may be studied at a later time of this journey.

Week 5 includes a "Life Discovery" Exercise to help you to reflect on God's work in your life. Take the time you need to finish these exercises, even if it takes several weeks. Remember to share your life stories at the end as they will be inspiring moments for your group.

This workbook is meant to guide you to start your role in God's mission and to seek ways to bless others. Remember this is just the beginning of a life transforming journey. May we keep embracing these practices so God will use us to bear fruit for Him for many years to come!

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# Begin with Worship and Prayer

*A study of Paul's Letter to the Ephesians on worship, prayer, and living out a missional life to bless others*

## Worship and Living out a Missional Life

We might often think that living missionally is a way of doing something for God, especially sharing the gospel. Actually, God values our lives more than He values our service. Service without life in it is like a Ferris wheel, turning unceasingly but without a destination or direction.

For someone whose life is filled with the grace of God, however, serving and worship are a spiritual act of response. The apostle Paul says, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship." (Rom. 12:1)

When we live missionally, we know intimately that God's grace is mobilizing our lives, and are deeply touched by God's blessing. Our first response is not to do something for God, but to worship our gracious God.

Paul said in his letter to the Ephesians, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ." (Eph. 1:3). Our response to God, who has given us every spiritual blessing in Christ, is worship. In worshipping Him we remember the grace and blessings that God has given us. Therefore the first three chapters of Paul's letter are all about worship. Chapter 1 starts with Praise and Worship, followed by Exhortation in Chapter 2, and in Chapter 3, the response to worship and prayers – mission of the gospel. The last paragraph of Chapter 3 is Benediction. Paul's worship of the Triune God helps him know more about his identity in Christ (See Eph. 1:3-14).



## God's People are Privileged

In this world, many people earn their honoured positions, or are given such positions by others who hope to get some benefit in return.

But Paul knows for sure that the status of God's people is highly privileged and honoured. Even before we came into being, God unconditionally chose us in Christ before our creation so that we were considered holy and blameless before Him (See Eph. 1:4-5).

## God's People are Precious

Paul knows that God's people are precious. Our lives are redeemed by the precious blood of His Son Jesus Christ, and our iniquities are forgiven in accordance with God's abundant grace (See Eph. 1:7).

## God's People are Living with a Purpose

In Paul's worship, he reiterates that God works out everything in our lives to conform with the purpose of His will. (See Eph. 1:5, 9-11) our lives do not come about by chance, but are full of purpose in God's will.

## God's People are Protected

From Paul's worship we can see that God's people have great blessings. If all of these blessings were to disappear, then they are all in vain. Paul knows that all our blessings are protected by the Holy Spirit, because the Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance. (See Eph. 1:14)

Worship is an interactive relationship. From Paul's writing on worship in Ephesians Chapter 1, we know that it helps us deepen our understanding of God and of ourselves. We know that we are privileged and honourable, precious, purposeful in life, and are protected. This is not just head knowledge, but also heart knowledge through our life experience. Every spiritual journey is a vibrant life story. Through worship, we meditate on God's blessings for our everyday life. Our relationship with God takes root and deepens through these substantial experiences.

This deepened relationship is the force that mobilizes our missional life. Not that we do not know how to share the gospel, or to serve, or to live out a missional life, but that we lack mobilizing power. Our hearts are filled with fear and pretext. If we do not recognize and have not experienced God's blessing, where do we get the power to respond to the mission that God is sending us to? Therefore worship and living missionally are closely related. It's no wonder why Paul says after his worship, "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received." (Eph. 4:1)

## Prayers and Living out a Missional Life

Worship and prayer always go hand in hand. In Chapters 1 & 3 of Ephesians, Paul includes two passages of prayers. (See Eph. 1:15-23; 3:14-21) In worship we ask God to grant us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that we may know Him better, and so that we may know the hope to which He has called us, the riches of His glorious inheritance, and His incomparably great power. (See Eph. 1:17-18) This is a prayer thirsting for God, because we know that God's blessing and grace pour out unceasingly into our lives. We therefore long for experiencing His glory and power, more than ever before.

In prayer we get in touch with the greatness of God; at the same time we see our own insignificance and unworthiness. But God redeems

us completely according to the fullness of His grace. (See Eph. 2) Through prayer, the glorious power of God and the lowliness and weakness of man come to a meeting point, compelling us to pray with a thankful heart. However, thanksgiving is not only a prayer expressed by the heart; it is also a willingness to offer our lives to the Lord for His use.

Therefore the prayer in Chapter 3 of Ephesians is one offering his life as a response to God's call to mission, in the hope that everyone who belongs to God can step forward to be a messenger of the gospel. Let us follow the example of Paul in prayer, and be willing to be sent by God. Let us pray that God will help us grasp how wide and long and high and deep the love of Christ is. Let us pray to be strengthened by the power of God. It is pleasing to God that we respond in obedience to His love by living out a missional life and being a blessing to others.

We do not live out and finish a missional life by mere commitment. We do so by complete surrender of our lives to the Lord through prayer, asking God to fill us with the love and power of our Lord Jesus Christ. May God open the door of blessings, and clearly show us the ones we are to bless. Unworthy as we are, we have received God's blessing and calling; let's rely on God's grace to bless others, and enjoy together the infinite blessings from God as part of His family.

## Reflection

**How do I approach worship and prayer today? As a bystander? Or as someone who worships and prays with a longing to meet with God, who experiences His blessings and awaits His sending?**

## Weekly Challenges

- **Come to worship service with reverence and the expectation to encounter God.**
- **Write down a list of people you wish to bless this year.**
- **Form a prayer partner group of 3 to 4 brothers and sisters to pray together and hold each other accountable to obedience.**

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## Week 1 | Begin with Worship and Prayer

### Day 1

## Worship and Mission

### ■ Matthew 4:1-11

*Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written:*

*'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:*

*'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"*

*Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.*

Right after Jesus was commissioned and before His earthly gospel ministry began, He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. The temptations were about choices between pleasing God and pleasing his own desires. Today, we also face the constant struggle between these two forces as we try to live missionally.

Firstly, Jesus was tempted to satisfy His own physical needs in the wilderness. Imagine fasting and praying for forty days, Jesus must have been desperately hungry (v. 2). The devil's tactic was to lure Him to address His legitimate needs in an illegitimate way - that is, by His own power instead of relying on God's Word and His provision.

Second, Jesus was tempted to test God in the holy city (v. 5) where God dwelled. The devil led Jesus away from the wilderness, where God was at a distance, into the holy city, where God was present. When we "think" we are close to God, we often let

down our guards and attempt to satisfy our ego using our own ways. Since the devil recognized Jesus' trust in His Father's Word, he twisted the meaning of Psalm 91:11-12 by omitting the phrase "guard you in all your ways". God promises to guard us if we obey and abide by His will. But we must not expect Him to intervene supernaturally while we are jeopardizing our lives. We must not test God and let our ego deceive our faith in God.

Third, Jesus was tempted to worship the devil on the mountain so He could receive all the glory of the kingdoms displayed in front of Him. We, too, often struggle between giving the glory to God or to ourselves. Remember God's mission is for our lives to reflect His glory. Nonetheless, we often act as glory absorbers, rather than glory reflectors. We react to praise by absorbing the glory which God deserves. Jesus, on the other hand, made it clear to the devil that He would worship and serve God alone (v. 10). In the same way, we must worship God with all our hearts, all our souls, and reflect all the glory to Him. Our act of worship must constantly be reminded of our servanthood and His Lordship, so He is the One who gets the glory. Furthermore, our attitude toward worship is not at about what we can get from it (though God loves to give abundant blessings to all His children) but about what we can give to Him!

This passage reminds us to keep praying, trusting in God and His Word. We must worship Him with all our hearts and all our might. This is the basis of our missional living.

### Reflection

**Examine the attitude of my worship and prayer life. Does it exalt God? Do I trust in the promises of His Word? As I pray, do I put my trust in Him? Does my life reflect God's glory?**

### Prayer

*Dear Lord Jesus, anchor me in Your Word and prayer whenever I am tempted. Humble me to follow Your will, rather than my ego. You are the King of kings and Lord of lords! You alone are worthy of our praises, our worship and all of the glory! Amen.*

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## Week 1 | Begin with Worship and Prayer

### Day 2

## Jesus Connects with the Father

### ■ Matthew 14:15-23

*As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food."*

*Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."*

*"We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered.*

*"Bring them here to me," he said. And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.*

*Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone,*

Five loaves of bread and two fish were transformed to feed five thousand men, women and children, this is undoubtedly one of the best known miracles that Jesus had performed. Simply imagine yourself sitting among the crowd to receive the bread and fish. You have just witnessed an exhilarating event! Now imagine yourself as one of the disciples. You have just participated in one of the greatest miracles in the history of mankind! You are so thrilled that your heart rate might be off the charts. You want to experience more as it has made you feel so great!

It is our natural instinct to want more. Our hearts and minds are black holes that have a constant craving to be filled. Sadly, we often choose to fill this vacuum with excitement, material possessions

or accomplishments that stemmed from our wrong motives.

The crowd had just turned Jesus into an instant celebrity! One can see them chasing after Him, thanking Him. At this point when all the attention was on Jesus, what do you think He chose to do? He was not at all moved by the human praise but chose instead to dismiss the crowds so He could go to the mountainside to pray alone. This action is rather unusual to us but not to Jesus. Scripture often mentions Jesus spending time alone with His Father at the peaks of His ministry. He treasured quiet moments to discern His Father's will and to nurture their relationship. Jesus found enrichment from His Father's praise (See Matt. 3:17) way more than from the people.

Since Jesus' earthly mission originated from God, He constantly returned to God to draw strength and to seek guidance. Let us also remember, to always connect to God as we embark on this "Called to B.L.E.S.S." journey. God is the author and sustainer of our mission. We cannot achieve anything without Him. We must dwell in Him, and Him alone.

### Reflection:

**God treasures our relationship with Him more than what we do for Him. Am I achieving a good balance between the time I spend with God and the time spent in my ministries and services? If over commitment is hindering my relationship with God, learn to say "no". "Be still, and know I am God" (Ps. 46:10).**

### Prayer:

*Dear Heavenly Father, I long to abide by You. You are the source of my love, my wisdom and my strength. I know I can do nothing without You. I am grateful for Your abundant love. I seek to be renewed by You every day. Grow my desire to yearn for You like deer pants for the streaming water. Amen.*

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## Week 1 | Begin with Worship and Prayer

### Day 3

## Seek God's Kingdom First

### ■ Matthew 6:5-13

*“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*

*“This, then, is how you should pray:*

*“Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from the evil one.’*

### ■ Matthew 6:31-34

*So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

Recently, we hear so much about the unstable political and economic situations in different countries. People are worried about losing their jobs or losing pay at their jobs. We read in the paper and hear on the news about robberies and shootings all the time. It is safe to assume that there are people worried about their personal finances and being able to take care of themselves.

However, as Christians we can have victory over this anxiety because of the promises of Christ. While He did not promise that we would be rich or even well off necessarily, He does promise God's care and protection as we read in these verses.

Jesus has summarized his line of thought at the start of verse 31 where He says “Do not worry”. It is pretty easy for me to sit here and write that but it has not always been easy to do it. However, as we read the preceding verses, we see why we should not worry. God takes care of birds and flowers; therefore, it is certainly reasonable for us to trust that He is going to take care of us. Because of that, we do not need to make acquiring the necessities of life (food, water, clothing) our priority.

With this knowledge, we are free to not have to worry about how we are going to take care of ourselves and we can make serving God and living for His glory our main priority. As Jesus says in verse 33, we are to “seek first” the kingdom of our Father. Our primary priority is to glorify God in all we do. In doing so, we do not display our own righteousness which is like filthy rags anyways. We seek “His righteousness” because we recognize our moral bankruptcy. In doing so, our lives will look different. We will not be chasing after getting material things like the rest of the world. We will not have to compromise our integrity to try to get ahead or just to get what we think we need. We can be contented in the fact that when we serve God as our first priority “all these things will be added to [us]”. We, therefore, have no need to worry. This is actually reflected in the future grace that Jesus promised us in the Lord's Prayer (vv. 5-13) – that The Lord will give us our daily bread, and forgive our debts as well.

### Reflection:

**How is my relationship with God? What is the focus of my prayer recently?**

### Prayer

*Lord, You always accept me when I come running back to You. Holy Spirit, help me to stay focused on honoring You and only You today. Amen.*

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## Week 1 | Begin with Worship and Prayer

### Day 4

## Pray with Faith

### ■ Matthew 21:18-22

*“Early in the morning, as Jesus was on his way back to the city, he was hungry. Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. Then he said to it, ‘May you never bear fruit again!’ Immediately the tree withered.”*

*When the disciples saw this, they were amazed. “How did the fig tree wither so quickly?” they asked.*

*Jesus replied, “Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.”*

### ■ James 1:6-8

*But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.*

It was a little early in the year for the harvest of figs, since this occurred during the Holy week, which was the last week of March. This was an early growth for fig tree. The early figs are edible, but not as good as the figs that are harvested in June. The point is that the presence of leaves indicates that there should be fruit. Yet this was an unusual early growth. As Jesus was hungry, He expected He could pick some fruit from it. The question then is often raised as to why Jesus would curse a tree that was not supposed to be in season. The point is that the leaves on the tree advertised that there were figs there as well, but it was a false advertisement. Jesus used this to teach a memorable lesson: the tree was cursed not just because it was not bearing fruit, but because it was making a show of life that promised fruit but delivered none. What Jesus intended by this acted parable was that those who make a show of being religious but in fact are spiritually barren will be cursed. In this context it would apply directly to

Israel, but it actually applies to all people who produce no evidence of genuine spiritual life. The Jewish leaders in the context of Matthew are the primary targets, for they advertised piety without producing true righteousness. So the message is clear: those who claim to be pious better produce the fruit of righteousness or they too will fall under the Lord’s judgment.

Jesus’ answer to the disciple draws upon his earlier teaching (See Matt. 17:20) that with faith all things are possible, even casting this mountain--probably the Mount of Olives on which they were standing--into the sea. This is a hyperbolic example of a miracle--whether what is to be done is great or small, faith is sufficient.

So based on this miracle and the disciples’ question, Jesus taught them a lesson on the power of believing in prayer. The faith that Jesus taught throughout His life was a genuine faith on the power of God and a developed discernment of His will. They should discover what the will of the Lord is, and then by faith pray for it to happen, not matter how impossible it might seem.

### Reflection:

**Has anything happened lately to shake my faith in God? Trust God and let His power be revealed in my life.**

### Prayer:

*Lord, grant me faith in our prayers so that I will honor You according to Your will. Give me the courage to bear fruit and lead more friends to Christ. Amen.*



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## Week 1 | Begin with Worship and Prayer

### Day 5

## Keep Watch and Pray

### ■ Matthew 26:36-46

*Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."*

*Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."*

*Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."*

*He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."*

*When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.*

*Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour has come, and the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. 46 Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"*

Jesus was about to be betrayed by Judas and to be seized by their enemies. He knew that the time was near for Him to be crucified on the cross. Though hesitant, Jesus knew that He must die on the cross to accomplish His redemptive mission. This was no easy task, even for Jesus who is fully human and fully God. His soul was so sorrowful, even to the point of death (v. 38). When faced with this dilemma, Jesus did not find an escape route but instead chose to go to Gethsemane to pray. On one hand, Jesus knew that He should obey His Father's will. On the other hand, He was pleading His

Father to let this cup be passed from Him. This cup represents the painful journey of suffering leading to His death on the cross (See Matt. 20:22-23).

We have a desire to obey God but it often conflicts with our personal interests and preferences. Jesus said, "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." (v. 41). We are often tempted to follow the desire of our flesh, to seek comfort and pleasure. Nonetheless, the Spirit always reminds us to step out of our comfort zone to seek God's Kingdom and His mission. We will face sufferings and temptations but Jesus taught us to always keep watch (i.e. keep awake) and pray. We should always be alert of the constant battle between the flesh and the Spirit (See Rom. 7:18).

This Called to B.L.E.S.S. journey reminds us of God's calling for us to bless others. Sometimes, we may be reluctant to embrace the opportunities and challenges that God has presented for us. Remember Jesus' example. At critical times, it was by the power of prayers that Jesus sustained God's will. Let us learn to keep watch and pray as we embrace our missions from God.

### Reflection:

**Starting next week, we will learn more essentials to prepare us to deliver the blessings. Are you ready to accept these challenges? Have you seek a prayer partner yet? Commit to continue on this journey with your prayer partners.**

### Prayer:

*Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for demonstrating your model of obedience. Set me free from the desires of my flesh. Give me the strength to keep watch, pray, and obey so my life will always be aligned to God's will. Amen.*

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## Week 1 | Begin with Worship and Prayer

### Small Group Sermon Response Discussion Guide

*This guide aims to help you to review, personalize and apply the sermons, along with the weekly featured articles and the devotion readings.*

#### 1. Review the Sermon (15 minutes)

- a. Can you think of a question that you believe the sermon message was trying to address or resolve?  
Share your question with the group.

.....

How did the speaker answer this question through the sermon message?  
How did the featured article help in answering this question?

.....

- b. Which attributes of God were stated or implied by the sermon message?

.....

- c. If you were tasked to give a one minute summary of the sermon message for a group member who was absent, what would you say?

.....

#### 2. Personalize the Sermon (20 minutes)

- a. What did you hear that encouraged and reassured you?

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- b. What did you hear that challenged and convicted you?

.....

#### 3. Apply the Sermon (20 minutes)

- a. What personal application of the message has the Lord revealed to you?

.....

How can you apply this message and integrate the “Weekly Challenges” into your life?

.....

- b. If you were to diligently apply the message, what effect would it have on your schedule, choices, relationships, ministries, and daily walk with Christ?

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# Listen Like Jesus

*As we enter the second week of our Called to B.L.E.S.S. journey, I hope that God has already given you and your small group an idea of whom you are going to bless. If not, then continue to pray fervently about this. Also, continue to deepen your relationship with God through worship and prayers. From Week 2 to Week 4, we will be learning how to imitate Jesus to bless people around us and our community through: listening, eating together and serving them. During this week's quiet time, we will learn, through a study of the gospel of John, how Jesus listened to the heavenly Father and to people He met.*

Many times we hear someone but do not listen intently. Hearing is passive, and does not involve a deliberate choice. When other people talk, we hear, but do not necessarily care about what they say. Hearing is egocentric, to the extent that before the speaker finishes, we rush in to tell them our own opinions. But Scripture says, “He who answers before listening – that is his folly and his shame.” (Prov. 18:13) Conversely, listening is proactive, intentional, and considerate of the speaker. In listening, every sentence, tone, expression, and even the body language of the speaker will impress upon the heart of the listener. Listening is an expression of love.

## Listening is a Display of Love

Paul Tillich once said. “The first duty of love is to listen.” Listening is a display of love. The listener lays his or her self aside first, and through listening draws the other person’s life into the listener’s own heart. Hearing without intentional listening is like shutting the speaker out. The late German theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said, “Poor listening rejects, good listening embraces. Poor listening diminishes the other person, while good listening invites them to exist, and to matter.” (Footnote 1) As people feel accepted and approved, they are also more willing to open up their lives to others, because they know that those who listen to



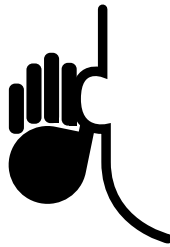
them love them. Because the love of God fills us fully, we do not listen with judging ears, but with hearts of kindness and love. Bonhoeffer also said, “Just as love to God begins with listening to His word, so the

beginning of love for the brethren is learning to listen to them.” (Footnote 2)

Many times we do not have the patience to listen to others. As soon as they are half way into what they want to say, we cut them off. Be aware that for some people who have been badly hurt or in great pain, we will need to give them even longer periods of trusting, expressing and much more opportunity, before they open up themselves. We might want to pray to God for patience, but we should instead pray for God’s love to fill us, so that we live in His love all the time, and let His love fill up our lives to the full. Love is patient, love is kind.

## Listening is a Gift of Grace

Listening is an intangible gift that can be given away by anyone. In light of people’s busy schedules, not everyone is willing to give this gift. Listening is the unconditional gifting of our time to others. Even though it is not substantive, it is given by grace. This grace is given out when other people get our attention when they least expect it. Listening is the outflow of the grace of life. As we repeatedly encounter the grace of God in our lives, we naturally become more willing to give away our time to listen to others without expectation.



## Listening Calls for a Humble Heart

We need a humble heart to listen to others. Scripture says, “Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.” (Phil. 2:4-7) Do not practice listening out of our own ideas, but as an imitation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ has given us an example to follow, as He humbled Himself to become a

servant, and gave Himself as a selfless offering. Indeed, listening is a selfless way of serving that cares about the interests of others, an attitude that aligns with that of Christ Jesus.

## Listen to God before Listening to Others

Now that we are aware that listening should be rooted in love, grace and humility, we should also know that the “how” of listening is less important than the “why” we listen. That is, our relationship with God should be why we listen. God is the origin of love and grace, and He is the model of our humility and source of our power. And godly people listen to God. Scripture says, “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.” (John 10:27)

Whenever we are unwilling to listen to others, it reflects on our relationship with God. Bonhoeffer once said, “Many people are looking for an ear that will listen. They do not find it among Christians, because these Christians are talking where they should be listening. But he who can no longer listen to his brother will soon be no longer listening to God either; he will be doing nothing but prattle in the presence of God too.”

### Footnotes

1. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (NY: Harper and Rows Publishers, 1954).
2. Ibid.

## Weekly Challenge:

- Ask God to help you to listen and discover the needs of the people God has placed at your home, your work or school
- Share your discoveries with your groups and families

## Reflection:

Let us first be listeners before God, and experience His love and grace in our listening. Let us find out the needs of other people through our listening to them. “The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught.” (Isa. 50:4)

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## Week 2 | Listen Like Jesus

### Day 1

## Jesus Listens to the Lonely

### John 4:1-26

*Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John—although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.*

*Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.*

*When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)*

*The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)*

*Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”...*

The Lord Jesus reconciled the enmity between the Jews and the Samaritans when He purposely chose to go through Samaria on their way from Judea to Galilee (vv. 4, 9). Jesus, tired after the long journey, came to Sychar and rested by Jacob’s well (vv. 5-6) while His disciples went into town to buy food. A Samaritan woman came to draw water at about the sixth hour. Jesus broke down the social, religious, racial and sexual barriers and asked the Samaritan woman for water (v. 7). Throughout their conversation, Jesus led the woman to see beyond her physical human thirst to her deeper inner spiritual thirst. He revealed to her that her greatest need was to receive Jesus Christ the Messiah who was the Living Water that would become in her a spring of water welling up to eternal life, so that she would not be thirsty again.

The conversation directed our focus from the physical water which can never satisfy our thirst

to the spiritual Living Water which will make us thirst no more. As Jesus listened to the Samaritan woman, He made her realize that her true need was to receive the abundant life from the Living Water. The water that never satisfies is like the worldly pursuit of money, status, reputation and pleasures of sin; only the Living Water (the Holy Spirit) is given to those who believe in Christ (John 7:38). He is like streams of living water that flow from within, nourishing and quenching our thirst. This new life that is born of the Spirit will never dry up because Christ is the fountain of our life.

Jesus then proceeded to confront this woman on her sin. She had six husbands (v. 18). Feeling shameful and lonely, she came to draw water by herself because no one had wanted to associate with her. But Jesus accepted her and showed her that she would never find fulfillment and security from the world (v. 18). Her greatest need could only be met by reconciling with God and worshipping Him in truth and in spirit (v. 24).

How will you steer yourself from material pursuit to seeking spiritual fulfillment? How will you reprioritize your life and family relationship to deepen your intimacy with God? How can you learn from Jesus' way of listening to the lonely heart? Can you empathize with those who are living unfulfilling lives without the Savior? Will you encourage others to face their life's adversity by turning to Jesus, the source of Living Water? They will find abundant life in Christ!

### Reflection:

**Imagine that I am present in the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. What have I discovered and learned from the way Jesus listened and cared for the lonely and hurting woman? How would I have responded?**

### Prayer:

*Holy Spirit, please illuminate my soul so that I may know that no material gain nor pleasures of life can truly satisfy my soul; only Jesus the Living Water can satisfy the deepest longings of my heart. Help me to know and experience the abundant life in Christ. Lord, make me a channel of your blessing by listening, accepting and caring for the lonely and needy people you have brought into my life. Lead them to You Jesus, the source of Living Water that flows into eternity. Amen.*

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## Week 2 | Listen Like Jesus

### Day 2

## Jesus Listens to the Desperate

### ■ John 5:1-9

*Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?”*

*“Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.”*

*Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.*

*The day on which this took place was a Sabbath,*

There was a Bethesda pool near the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem where a great number of physically challenged people, including the blind, the lame and the paralyzed, used to lie as they waited for the moving of the waters. From time to time an angel of the Lord would come down and stir up the waters. The first one into the pool after each such disturbance would be cured of whatever disease he had (v. 4).

One who was there had been an invalid for 38 years. You can imagine how difficult it had been for him to lie down by the pool all day long, so desperate and hopeless with no one to help him. How lost he must have felt, so lonely and helpless, what a bleak and gloomy future! There Jesus Christ, the Son of God, (with divine healing authority) reached out to him. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, He asked him, “Do you want to get well?” (v. 6) “Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.” (v. 7) His reply showed that he did not know

that Jesus is the source of healing and restoration. Instead of seeking His healing, he mourned over his lethargic condition that had afflicted him for 38 years.

Jesus was moved with compassion when He saw the lame man's desperation and misery. He asked him, "Do you want to get well?" Jesus had compassion on the lame man and healed him of his infirmity. He said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." At once the man was cured. He picked up his mat and walked (vv. 8-9).

God demonstrated His own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us on the cross (Rom. 5:8). The Lord seek us (through his children) even before we acknowledge Him. He cured the lame man by His resurrection power (v. 9). Because Jesus is the resurrection and the life, He has the power to heal the lame man and deliver him from the power of darkness into the kingdom of light (See John 11:1-54). Later, Jesus found him and said to him, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you." (v. 14) Not only did Jesus heal his infirmity, He also healed his brokenness. Jesus did not condemn the lame man, but was concerned about his future. Jesus wanted him to lead a healthy lifestyle and not be enslaved by sin anymore or else something worse might happen to him and he would suffer God's judgment and wrath. Let us remember that our Lord Jesus is the source of healing and restoration. His presence will bring hope, strength and peace to every situation.

### Response:

- **Whom has Christ placed before you? Those whose spiritual eyes are blind (the blind); those who are burdened and heavy laden (the lame); those in distress and desperation (the paralyzed).**
- **How can these people be healed without the knowledge of God? How are you going to serve these broken and desperate people with the love and compassion of Christ?**
- **How can you lead them to Christ, the source of strength and healing and restoration, so they can do all things through Christ who can strengthen them? Please write down the names of the people whom God brings to your mind and pray for them.**

### Prayer:

*Lord Jesus, I bring before You (name of a friend) ..... . You know his/her needs and condition. Help him/her to realize that he/she cannot resolve life's problems by his/her own strength. Holy Spirit, illumine his/her heart and draw him/her to Jesus, the healer of his/her soul, the one who cares to listen to all of his/her problems. Give him/her faith to trust in You, to believe that Your grace is sufficient for him/her, that Your power is made perfect in his/her weakness, and that You will restore him/her to wholeness of life. Amen.*

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## Week 2 | Listen Like Jesus

### Day 3

## Listen to Each Other Like Jesus

### ■ John 10:1-8

*"Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.*

*Therefore Jesus said again, "Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them.*

Our Lord Jesus describes His relationship with His disciples as a Good Shepherd with his sheep. This relationship is found in His intimate relationship with God the Father (vv. 17-18). In this passage, Jesus mentioned two "I am" statements. He said, "I am the gate for the sheep" (v. 7), and He brought them safely into His sheep pen. In the same way, whoever believes in Jesus and enters through Him will be saved (v. 9) and will find eternal peace in

the kingdom of God. His sheep know the Good Shepherd who supplies all their needs as they come in and go out, and find pasture (v. 9). We, too, can find freedom and liberation from the power of sin if we acknowledge Jesus as our Savior and receive His salvation. The Good Shepherd will guide us, protect us and meet all our needs. We shall find fulfillment in our life as we follow Him.

Jesus also said, “I am the Good Shepherd” (vv. 11, 14). How does He shepherd us? How does He demonstrate His love for us who are so precious in His sight?

- The Good Shepherd sacrificed His life for His sheep: The Good Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep (vv. 11,15) so that they can have life to the full (v. 10). Jesus came not to take away from us, but to give us His life that we may know the fullness of life in Him (See Col. 2:9-10).
- The Good Shepherd knows His sheep: The sheep listen to His voice. He calls His own sheep by name. His sheep know His voice and follow Him (vv. 3-4, 14). The Good Shepherd gives a name to each sheep, calls them by name and leads them out. The sheep know the Shepherd’s voice and follow Him. “I know my sheep and my sheep know me” (v. 14). This kind of intimate knowledge is the result of a deep understanding and a close fellowship with each other. Jesus desires to have such an intimate relationship with His disciples through close interaction, connection and fellowship as exemplified by His own relationship with His heavenly Father – “Understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father” (v. 38). “If we remain in Him, He will also remain in us” (John 15:5). Will we then not know God and be known by God (See Gal. 4:9) just as His sheep know the Shepherd’s voice? In the same way, as disciples of Christ, we should also desire to know His fullness and be illumined and enlightened by the Holy Spirit in knowing, understanding and discerning the voice of God. To cultivate such an intimate relationship with God, we have to practice the discipline of silence, solitude and prayer as well as to mediate on God’s word diligently.
- The Good Shepherd leads His sheep: Our Great Shepherd Jesus knows us through and through.

He knows our temperament, our needs and desires, our feelings and emotions. Despite our sinfulness and weaknesses, He still loves us unconditionally, patiently calling us and leading us in the path of righteousness. We have to respond to His call by putting our faith and trust in His promises, His love and His deliverance. Though we do not know what the future may bring, we can commit ourselves wholly to our God who holds our future in His hand. Fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. He will surely lead and guide us, and as we follow His footsteps, we will know the full abundant life He has promised to all who believe.

### Reflection:

**How can a sheep experience and enjoy the provision of his shepherd? They need to listen, know and discern the master’s voice and follow him. Being a sheep of God, do I practice the discipline of silence, solitude and prayer as well as meditate on God’s word diligently? How can I learn to listen, understand, believe, trust, obey and follow Christ’s leading and guidance?**

### Prayer:

*Lord Jesus, thank You for being my Good Shepherd and laying down Your life for me. Help me to know You more, love You more and follow You closely. Amen.*

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## Week 2 | Listen Like Jesus Day 4

# Jesus Listens to the Hurt

## ■ John 11:32-45

*When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. “Where have you laid him?” he asked.*

*“Come and see, Lord,” they replied. Jesus wept.*

*Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”*

*But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"*

*Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. "Take away the stone," he said. "But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days." Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."*

*Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.*

Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He lived in Bethany with his two sisters, Mary and Martha. When Lazarus became critically ill, Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus to come and heal him (See John 11:3). However, when Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, He purposely delayed until Lazarus was dead and buried for four days (v. 39). The two sisters were overwhelmed with grief and lamented over the delay of Jesus, saying, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died" (John 11:21, 32).

We learned from Martha's response that she believed Jesus had the power to heal Lazarus if He had been here but now it was too late since Lazarus had already died. Will you respond like Martha, putting God in a box that limits His power to answer your prayers in times of crisis?

Let us look at Mary's response. She fell at the feet of Jesus and wept hopelessly. She could neither understand nor accept His plan. She felt disappointed, disillusioned, despaired and distressed because Jesus did not heal her brother. Have you ever felt discouraged like Mary did? Did you blame God when He did not answer your prayer the way you asked? Have you ever lost hope and faith in God in the midst of trials and tribulations and sank into depression and despair, feeling defeated by all the negative emotions?

Our Lord Jesus does hear our cry of distress in His time and in His way. "Take away the stone," Jesus

said

(v. 39). Though Martha believed that Jesus, being the Son of God, can ask God for anything (v. 27), yet she did not have the faith to believe that a miracle can still happen now that Lazarus had already been dead and buried for four days.

When we feel helpless in the face of adversity, when God's timing and ways are so different from ours, can we still hold on to our faith without wavering? Or do we confine the infinite God to our own finite human intellect? We may dare to bombard God with many questions: Why God seems so distant? Doesn't God care? Why does God let me suffer? Why does God let me get trapped with no way out? Will you respond like Mary and Martha, though confessing their faith in Christ, yet displayed such little faith when faced with adversity?

Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." When He had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" and the dead man came out (vv. 40-44). Did you not realize that "the stone" represents our human rationalization for our disobedience and unbelief in God? In order to know the resurrection power of Christ, we must take away "the stone", all of our finite human thinking and reasoning. We cannot experience the power of the resurrected Christ in our lives unless "the stone" is removed. If we believe, we will see the glory of God, for nothing is too hard for God (See Jer. 32:17). We only need to take a step of faith and His power will be unleashed upon us, for even before a word is on our tongue, God knows it completely. (See Ps. 139:2-4)

## Reflection:

**Do I share Martha's dilemma? Do I have faith in God only when everything is going well; but when faced with adversity, my faith starts to waver? How strong is my faith? Is it just head knowledge or can it carry you through the storms of life? How well do I listen and empathize with those who are hurting and grieving? How can I encourage them to put their faith in God?**

## Prayer:



*Jesus, You are the resurrected Lord. You have said, "If you believe, you shall see the glory of God." Please help me to put my trust in You in all circumstances of my life. Grant me faith to know the resurrected power of Christ in all the days of my life. Set me free from the bondage of doubt and fear. Empower me to overcome all the trials of life through the Lord Jesus Christ so that Your name will be glorified. Amen.*

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## Week 2 | Listen Like Jesus

### Day 5

## Jesus Listens to the Father

### 📖 John 5:19–24

*Jesus gave them this answer: "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, and he will show him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.*

*"Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.*

How often do you follow what you like, prefer, or passionate about, but not listening to or follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit? Have you ever let your mind wander and be distracted even when you seek the Lord in prayer? In order to be able to listen to the Lord and live in His will, we must practice the discipline of drawing near to His presence, spending time in stillness and listening for God's voice.

In John 5:19–24, the apostle John used the Father-Son imagery to illustrate the intimate relationship of God the Father and Jesus. Jesus being the Son of God chose to align Himself with the Father's will, exemplifying the perfect unity of Father and Son. "...the Son can only do what he sees the Father doing, because whatever the Father does, the Son

also does" (v. 19b). Our Lord Jesus humbles Himself before the Father and willingly subject Himself to the Father's will. Whatever the Father does, He does; whatever the Father says, He says; for the Father and Son are unified with one purpose and goal in fulfilling His will.

How can Jesus know all that the Father does? The key is "love". "For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does" (v. 20). True love is putting the other's needs and interests before your own. Because of the Father's love for the Son, He gave Him all His authority to accomplish His mission (vv. 21, 22, 27). "He will show him even greater things than these. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it"(See John 5:21, 11:26).

The unity of His work with the Father's work manifests the oneness in essence between the divine God the Father and Jesus the Son of God. Jesus is the Son of God. Lord Jesus has the nature of God, life and authority. He has authority to give eternal life to all who believe in Him. For He has come that man may have life and have it to the full (John 10:10).

What is the key from death to life? It is to hear and trust. "Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged, but has crossed over from death to life" (John 5:24). To hear is to trust and obey, for those who belong to God hears what God says (See John 8:47; Matt. 11:15). We can have access to this eternal life right now; we will no longer be condemned or judged, for by his death on the cross Christ had paid the penalty and made atonement for our sin. Jesus said, "...their sins and their lawless acts, I will remember no more" (Heb. 10:17).

### Reflection:

**Since Jesus has made a way for sinners not to be condemned, but whoever hears and believes in Him will have eternal life, will I accept His invitation to trust and believe Him as your personal Savior and Lord? Or have I already heard and trusted in Jesus Christ who gives eternal life?**

### Prayer:

*Holy Spirit, teach me to be like Jesus always listening to His Father's voice; help me to trust, obey and heed to Your call. Show me how to hear our Lord's call, discern Your voice and lead others to Christ. Amen.*

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## Week 2 | Listen Like Jesus

### Small Group Sermon Response Discussion Guide

*This guide aims to help you to review, personalize and apply the sermons, along with the weekly featured articles and the devotion readings.*

#### 1. Review the Sermon (15 minutes)

- a. Can you think of a question that you believe the sermon message was trying to address or resolve?  
Share your question with the group.

.....

How did the speaker answer this question through the sermon message?  
How did the featured article help in answering this question?

.....

- b. Which attributes of God were stated or implied by the sermon message?

.....

- c. If you were tasked to give a one minute summary of the sermon message for a group member who was absent, what would you say?

.....

#### 2. Personalize the Sermon (20 minutes)

- a. What did you hear that encouraged and reassured you?

.....

- b. What did you hear that challenged and convicted you?

.....

#### 3. Apply the Sermon (20 minutes)

- a. What personal application of the message has the Lord revealed to you?

.....

How can you apply this message and integrate the “Weekly Challenges” into your life?

.....

- b. If you were to diligently apply the message, what effect would it have on your schedule, choices, relationships, ministries, and daily walk with Christ?

.....

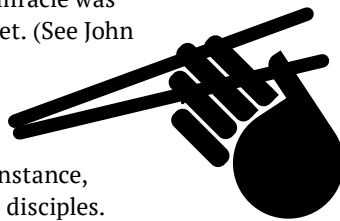
# Eat Missionally

The phrase “the Son of Man came” appears in Matthew’s Gospel three times. Matthew 18:11 reads, “For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.” (NASB version) (See also Lu 19:10.) Matthew 20:28 reads, “just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.” (See also Mr 10:45.) These two verses assure us that the mission of Jesus Christ in this world is to find and save the lost people through His service and eventually through His death on the cross.

The phrase “the Son of Man came” appears again in Matthew 11:19, “The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and ‘sinners’’. But wisdom is proved right by her actions.” Jesus said that the Son of Man came to eat and drink. The reason for doing so was that it was one of Jesus’ missions on earth to eat and drink with people He met. Most of Jesus’ ministry on earth took place around the dining table when people were eating and drinking. His first miracle was performed at a wedding banquet. (See John 2:11)

Jesus made contact with different groups of people mostly during meal time. For instance, He ate His last supper with His disciples. After His resurrection He met two disciples on the road to Emmaus. The last time He broke bread with His disciples was on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias. He appeared to them, prepared breakfast for them, and reinstated Peter.

The Jews misunderstood Jesus for being a glutton, not recognizing His intention to befriend tax collectors and sinners. In those days, these groups of people were neglected and isolated by the Jewish people. Jesus’ mission was to become their friend through eating and drinking. Clearly, dining with people is a missional practice.



## The Dining Table is where Relationships are Built

Has modern living put aside the function of the dining table to build relationships? In this high-tech society, even though people eat together, they might spend that meal checking their cell phone. Many households switch on the TV during meal times. As a result, nobody pays attention to those sitting and dining with them. The most extreme example is our fast food culture, where we try to finish a meal in the shortest possible time, so as to beat our tight schedule, oblivious to and totally neglecting those who eat beside us.

Let’s restore the dining table as a place to build relationships. Let’s allow opportunities for the mutual sharing of our life stories, be they mundane matters or matters of vital importance. Together, let’s recall things of the past, dream about things of the future, laugh together, and shed tears together. No matter whether we are at the same or different stages of our spiritual journey, we can find and experience the faithfulness and the grace of our God. Maybe we are hesitant to speak about the gospel in

front of non-believers. But let us remember that sharing the gospel is not the same as talking about theological doctrines; it is the sharing of God's story in our lives. Therefore, as we exchange life stories over the dining table, God will reveal Himself naturally through our life stories.

## **The Dining Table is where Barriers are Broken**

We frequently dine with family members, Christian brothers and sisters, friends, colleagues, classmates, co-workers, etc. Each category of people may eat together at different times and places. The most probable places where we eat together with colleagues and classmates are at the work place and at school, and during lunch hours. For Christian brothers and sisters, dining together mostly take place after small group meetings or worship services, either at a restaurant or at home.

It is quite likely that we spend more time eating with our family members than with others, and this mostly takes place at home. We love to eat together with our close relatives during holidays and special occasions, as a tradition or a routine. Our relationship with people is, to some extent, revealed by the occasions where we eat with them. Imagine this: if you were to invite a coworker to have breakfast at your house, would that person be someone with a deeper friendship? The feeling among brothers and sisters, as they eat together at home, may be more intimate than when they eat together in a restaurant. What do you think your casual friends would feel if, during a major festive occasion, you invited them to your home for a meal?

The way a meal is eaten together may draw an invisible boundary among people in terms of intimacy and acceptance. However, Jesus has broken the boundary by eating with those who were rejected by their community. He did so because He accepted and loved those who were marginalized and who needed His good news. He was willing to intentionally break down boundaries and mix with all people, thereby deepening relationships. The dining table is definitely where boundaries can be taken away. Although we may be frightened by the thought of eating together with people we do not know well, this is a sure way to break down walls and show acceptance and grace.

## **The Dining Table is where We Serve**

It is a form of hospitality to invite others to our home where we spend our daily lives, and to prepare a meal for them. This hospitality is more than the offer of food, but also an offer to your guests to be at home. The quality of the meal is not the focus; more important is the way that we serve them. When we serve our guests at home, they enter into our personal space. They become a part of our lives. Serving at the dining table is a service involving mutual sharing of lives. Those who serve their guests offer not only their time, heart, and space, but also part of their daily lives and their personal lives. This way of serving others draws people closer together. Is this not the essence of the gospel? The gospel draws people closer to God, so that the distance between people are also drawn closer. Let us use the dining table to serve others.

### **Weekly Challenge:**

- **As a small group / individual, invite an unacquainted friend to dine together (preferably at home but is not mandatory).**

### **Reflection:**

**The dining table is the first of our evangelistic stronghold, a place for exchange of life stories, for mutual acceptance and inclusion, and for serving others. With at least three meal times per day, how shall we make good use of these opportunities given to us by God to serve others?**

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## Week 3 | Eat Missionally

### Day 1

## Gracious Inclusion

### ■ Luke 5: 27-32

*After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed him.*

*Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"*

*Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."*

Meals are prominent in the Gospel of Luke. Jesus was always on His way to have a meal with others - usually with the outcasts and the sinners (See 7:29, 31-34; 14:1-24; 15:1-2: 19:1-10). In this story, Jesus "saw" a toll collector by the name of Levi (v. 27). Toll collectors collected the tolls, tariffs, and customs fees at toll houses. The system was open to corruption and the toll collectors often derived profit from the tolls they received. This group appeared frequently in the Gospels as 'tax collectors'. Tax collectors often had no qualifications and no education. They were at the lower strata of the society. They were hated by the Jews because they earned profit from the Jews. On the contrary, the Pharisees were well respected by the Jews. They lived out a devoted life to the Lord through their observance of the Torah and maintenance of purity in all matters. The Pharisees kept themselves separate from the sinners.

Jesus was the one "spotted" Levi, not the other way around (v. 27). He chose Levi out of sheer grace and called for a personal commitment - to follow Him. In response to this call, Levi accepted by leaving everything, getting up, and began to follow Jesus (v. 28). The verb "got up" indicates one's determination. Levi expressed his commitment by "forsaking everything". He dared to leave the toll station and abandoned his old living style.

Levi responded to the call by hosting a great feast for Jesus (v. 29). There was a large crowd of toll collectors and others in this feast because Levi wanted to share this good news with them. Pharisees labelled the others as sinners (v. 30). Obviously, the "others" did not measure up to the standard of the Pharisees and together with toll collectors were excluded from the Pharisees.

Unlike the Pharisees, Jesus chose to eat with Levi and all the toll collectors. Jesus graciously accepted Levi's invitation to the feast in his house. Jesus chose to be in Levi's social circle. He chose to be inclusive rather than exclusive, rejoicing with the lost rather than grumbling, (v. 30) and welcoming rather than rejecting.

### Reflection:

**God's grace is for everyone! Is there anyone in my circle that is being unintentional excluded by me? Maybe that is the one who would desperately need the love of God and His salvation.**

### Prayer:

*Dear Lord Jesus, have mercy on me to remove my blindfold and my barriers to your love. May You stretch my eyes to seek and have passion for the lost ones around me! Amen.*

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## Week 3 | Eat Missionally

### Day 2

## Eating with Adversaries

### ■ Luke 7:36-50

*When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.*

*When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman*

*she is—that she is a sinner.”*

*Jesus answered him, “Simon, I have something to tell you.”*

*“Tell me, teacher,” he said.*

*“Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?”*

*Simon replied, “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven.”*

*“You have judged correctly,” Jesus said.*

*Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.”*

*Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”*

*The other guests began to say among themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?”*

*Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”*

When we read this story, we usually focus on the harlot who is the main character. However, in today’s devotion, let’s focus on the interaction between Simon the Pharisee and Jesus. We often overlook where this story took place. Jesus was invited by Simon, a Pharisee into his home to eat with him. This Pharisee is among those mentioned in v. 30, “But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God’s purpose, for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.” In the previous two chapters of Luke, the Pharisees questioned Jesus (See Luke 5:21; 6:2), grumbled (See Luke 5:30) and watched diligently (See Luke 6:7).

We know that Jesus loved to be with the sinners. But Jesus also loved the Pharisees, even though He fully expected that there would be some controversial conversations at their meal interactions. In spite of this, Jesus did not avoid

Simon. Instead, Jesus embraced the opportunity to have a conversation with him.

Then a harlot came in to greet Jesus (v. 37) even though she was not invited to attend the banquet. The harlot was depicted as a woman who had lived a sinful life. She prepared an expensive and precious jar of ointment to anoint Jesus’ feet. This was extravagant giving (v. 38). However, Simon’s only concern was that the woman was a sinner and Jesus let her touch him

(v. 39). Jesus grasped the opportunity to teach Simon an important lesson on the response of God’s love

(vv. 40-47). The more one feels inadequate, the more one appreciates the abundance of love from God. Since Simon thought that he was good, he stopped serving (wash the feet (v. 44)), stopped greeting (v. 45) and stopped giving (v. 46) to Jesus who loved him.

This conversation might be the defining moment to Simon the Pharisee, although it is up to his own interpretation of the dialogue. Let us not forget that this opportunity was graciously granted by Jesus who had first accepted Simon’s invitation to his house, though Simon was among those who were against Him.

## **Reflection:**

**If I were Jesus, how would I transform this meal into an opportunity to share God’s love with the Pharisee and with the woman? Search my heart honestly to reveal the people, whom I have seldom approached, especially those who are against me. What fills my mind when I think of these people?**

## **Prayer:**

*Dear Lord Jesus, search my heart! Cast away my fear to dialogue with people who tend to complain, grumble and watch diligently over me. I know these people also need Jesus’ love. Lord, grant me the courage and kindness to accept Your divine challenge to eat with them. Give me Your wisdom and peace, Lord. Amen.*

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## Week 3 | Eat Missionally

### Day 3

## Meeting Others' Needs even when Tired

### 📖 Luke 9:12-17

*Late in the afternoon the Twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here."*

*He replied, "You give them something to eat."*

*They answered, "We have only five loaves of bread and two fish—unless we go and buy food for all this crowd." (About five thousand men were there.)*

*But he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each." The disciples did so, and everyone sat down. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.*

The feeding of the five thousand is the only miracle of Jesus that is recorded in all four Gospel books. Prior to this miracle, Jesus had already spent a long time with the apostles who reported to Him all they had done (See Mark 6:30). Jesus intended to go to a quiet place to get some rest with the apostles (See Mark 6:31). However, when the crowd saw them, they ran to them on foot from all the towns. Jesus had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd (See Mark 6:34). He started to heal the sick and teach the masses (See Matt. 14:14).

Try to imagine yourself as Jesus. It is late in the afternoon and you have been working all day. You are very tired and it is about time to rest. Would you act like the disciples and send people away so you could take a break and have some quiet time for yourself? The disciples were legitimate in their responses as they did not have enough food to

feed the large crowd, they were tired, it was late in the day, and they were at the countryside far away from the city. It would be better off for them to send the crowd away so they would not be starved to death and the disciples could get some rest to prepare for the next day. Logically, this would be a win-win situation, right?

However, Jesus did the unthinkable! Despite His exhaustion, Jesus did not only see the crowd's spiritual needs but also their physical needs (See Luke 9:13). To our surprise, Jesus decided to feed the 5,000 people! This was one of the greatest miracles He had performed. The disciples and the crowd experienced, at first-hand, the transformational power and the abundant grace of Jesus. This story could have been an ordinary one if Jesus had just listened to the disciples and turned the people away. Ironically, God's name was made known by this one wise decision that Jesus chose to make at His tiring moment!

### Reflection:

**Imagine I am one of Jesus' disciples. What lesson would I have learned from this miracle? I might have a lot of legitimate reasons not to practice my hospitality. Maybe I tell myself that there will always be a second chance. But what can I learn from the compassion that Jesus demonstrated to fulfill the needs of the people? How would I respond to interruptions when a great need is presented in front of me?**

### Prayer:

*Dear Lord Jesus, fill my heart with Your faith and compassion to meet the needs of others. Grant me Your love and strength to step out of my comfort zone to serve them. Let me experience Your transformational power and abundant grace as I serve. Holy Spirit, please guide me with discernment on how to serve others with hospitality. Amen*

## **Being Extravagantly Generous**

### **■ Luke 14:7-15**

*When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: “When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, ‘Give this person your seat.’ Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”*

*Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”*

*When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, “Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.”*

This parable teaches us the lesson of humility and hospitality. Meals were important social ceremonies at that time. In the Gospel of Luke, we learn that where (See 5:29), with whom (See 5:30), and how (See 7:44; 11:38) people ate meals had important social significance. Meal practices often revealed a difference in social status. Jesus and the Pharisees ate differently. Jesus’ meals included marginalized groups, which foreshadowed the celebration in God’s Kingdom. On the other hand, invitation to the Pharisee’s meals was based primarily on social status, thus the majority group was excluded.

The Second Coming of Jesus Christ was less of a concern to the early churches. Rather, they devoted their attention to heated discussions on the appropriate guests to invite to their meals and their community (See Acts 10, 15; Gal. 2:11-14). We can learn 2 lessons from this story. Firstly, meals are not all about status and honour but rather are joyful occasions to celebrate with one another (vv. 7-11). The host is the one who honours the guests. Secondly, we should not expect anything in return from our invited guests (vv. 12-13). Jesus taught us not to just invite our friends, our siblings, our relatives, or our rich neighbors. Instead, we should invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. These belong to the “forbidden” group (See Lev. 21:17-23). As we serve for His glory, we will receive blessing and honour from God, not from men.

### **Reflection:**

**This parable reminds us to rethink and reflect on our own Christian values. What are some of the barriers that I have consciously or subconsciously built up, which may prevent others from joining our Christian community or from receiving the grace of God? God does not look at our social status. God wants us to practice being extravagantly generous and inclusive in our daily fellowship with others. Is my small group a closed group or an open one? How can we better prepare ourselves to welcome any newcomer in our groups? Who are the newcomers that God has placed around me?**

### **Prayer:**

*Dear Lord Jesus, transform our minds and our hearts to be more like You who is humble and generous. Teach us to serve others with openness and with a sincere gratitude.*



## **Unconditional Acceptance**

### **■ Luke 19:1-10**

*Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.*

*When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.*

*All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.”*

*But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”*

*Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”*

Zacchaeus was not just a tax collector. He was a chief tax collector and a rich man (v. 2). At the same time, he was not a popular person among the Jews because he had defrauded many people (v. 8) and he was a sinner (v. 7). Maybe that was why nobody gave him a place to see who Jesus was and eventually had needed to climb up a sycamore tree in order to see Him (v. 4). Let's relate this incident to Jesus' announcement of the Kingdom earlier in Luke 18:18-25: “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God”. The rich ruler did not give priority of his life to Jesus. He chose to cling onto his wealth and sadly left Jesus. However, when we examine these two incidents closely, Zacchaeus was similar to this young rich ruler in some ways. They both ran to Jesus seeking Him urgently and sincerely (See Luke 19:4; Mark 10:17). Zacchaeus showed his humility by climbing up a tree which rich people would not normally do. Similarly, the young rich ruler knelt before Jesus (See Mark 10:17).

The difference, however, was that Zacchaeus welcomed Jesus with joy and gladness while the young rich ruler moved on with his life without Jesus in sadness. What made this difference? The young rich ruler came to Jesus with the wrong question in mind, “What can I do to inherit eternal life?” (Luke 18:18) while Zacchaeus came to Jesus with no expectation but to just see Him.

The first thing that Jesus told Zacchaeus was: “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house”(v. 5). Out of the great crowd, Jesus chose Zacchaeus the sinner, the marginalized and the unpopular. Jesus did not just greet him but went to stay in his house. This act signified Jesus' desire to pursue a closer relationship with Zacchaeus, which was a surprise to him. While others were rejecting him, he fully experienced Jesus' unconditional acceptance. Jesus offered to stay in his house and publicly acknowledged his dignity. Zacchaeus' eyes and heart were opened for repentance. He was accepted by the Lord and his life was greatly transformed. Zacchaeus was even willing to pay back four times the amount to his wronged, which was not required by the Old Testament after one had confessed his guilt (See Lev. 6:5; Num. 5:7). On the contrary, the rich young man in the previous chapter left with sadness because of his desire for money. Zacchaeus was able to make this extraordinary response because he was motivated by the unconditional acceptance of Jesus.

### **Reflection:**

**How would I treat those who are unaccepted or those who grumble against me (v. 7)? Am I ready to offer acceptance to people who are marginalized or not well-liked? Am I ready to eat with them and show them the Kingdom's love? Today, if I am going to eat like Jesus to show my acceptance to others, who would I invite? If I were Zacchaeus, how would I respond to the love and acceptance of the Lord?**

### **Prayer:**

*Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for granting me Your unconditional love and acceptance. Teach me to model after You. Help me to take a step to welcome others into my life by inviting them to eat with me. I trust that the Holy Spirit will take away my fear and anxiety and be willing to guide me through this journey. May my life become a channel of blessings to others!*

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## Week 3 | Eat Missionally

### Small Group Sermon Response Discussion Guide

*This guide aims to help you to review, personalize and apply the sermons, along with the weekly featured articles and the devotion readings.*

#### 1. Review the Sermon (15 minutes)

- a. Can you think of a question that you believe the sermon message was trying to address or resolve?  
Share your question with the group.

.....

How did the speaker answer this question through the sermon message?  
How did the featured article help in answering this question?

.....

- b. Which attributes of God were stated or implied by the sermon message?

.....

- c. If you were tasked to give a one minute summary of the sermon message for a group member who was absent, what would you say?

.....

#### 2. Personalize the Sermon (20 minutes)

- a. What did you hear that encouraged and reassured you?

.....

- b. What did you hear that challenged and convicted you?

.....

#### 3. Apply the Sermon (20 minutes)

- a. What personal application of the message has the Lord revealed to you?

.....

How can you apply this message and integrate the “Weekly Challenges” into your life?

.....

- b. If you were to diligently apply the message, what effect would it have on your schedule, choices, relationships, ministries, and daily walk with Christ?

.....

# Serve Like Jesus

*Over the past two weeks we have learned to bless others through “Listening Like Jesus” and “Eating Missionally Like Jesus”. Do not forget to pray for those whom we are to bless, and ask God to bless us, so that we may become a blessing to them. This week, we’ll be learning how to bless others by serving and caring for them.*

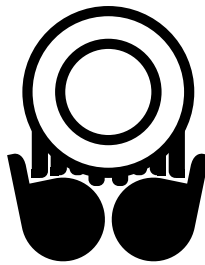


Word of God and His love. Then our hearts will not be overloaded with the emotions of those we serve.

## 1. The Essentials of Serving

### Serve in Proximity

The people we are going to serve should begin from those who are near to us. The locations where we live, learn, work, and even the people we meet while on public transport, are all arranged by God under His sovereign plan. This is by no means accidental; the people we meet, who God brings into various parts of our lives, are the people we serve.



### Serve Perceptively

Before we serve others, let us first listen to them and share a meal together. We aim to not serve them superficially, but to meet their deeper needs. We are to learn to listen to them with a perceptive mind and empathize with their life stories, so that our service can pinpoint their real needs.

### Serve Personally

We aim to serve at close physical proximity as well as to understand one’s heart and mind closely. We are to attempt to feel what they feel. Be cautious, though, to set an appropriate boundary for ourselves. Don’t just give into someone’s demands. On the other hand, we should be filled with the

## Serve Powerfully

Remember that the power with which we serve others does not come from ourselves. It comes from God the Almighty. Scripture says, “(He) is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us ...” (Eph. 3:20) Therefore, before we go out to serve, pray and ask for God to give us adequate power, since we know that we can succeed only when we lean on Him. And we are to serve in prayer too, for only through prayer seeking the great power of God are we able to complete what God has appointed us to do.

## 2. Attitudes of Serving

### Serve Sacrificially

Jesus says, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45) Jesus served sacrificially, by giving up His life to redeem us. Jesus did not demand that every believer sacrifices his or her life so as to serve others. But He teaches us to serve others with a sacrificial heart and mind. As our time, money and abilities are gifts from our Lord Jesus, let us surrender them to Him to be used for His purposes.

### Serve Sincerely

No doubt we hope that the people we are blessing will come to know our Lord Jesus. However, let us serve them with sincerity, no matter how they

respond to the gospel. Jesus knew full well that Judas Iscariot would betray Him; that Peter would deny Him thrice; that all the other disciples would desert Him as He suffered on the cross. Knowing that His disciples did not understand nor respond to His love, Jesus nevertheless served them by washing their feet during the last supper. (See John 13:5) Jesus has set a great example of serving others with sincerity, and we should all learn from Him.

## Serve Sustainably

Serving is a channel for building relationship. Do not take serving others as a short term matter. Some services are one-off, but much of what we do to serve people around us is long term. Sustained serving tells others that we serve sincerely and with love. At the least, serve without any complaint. Scripture says, “Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.” (Rom. 12:11-12)

### Weekly Challenges:

- Write up an action plan to address the needs of the people identified (week 2).
- Write up an action plan to address the friend you wish to dine with (week 3).

### Reflection:

What essential aspects and attitudes have I neglected as I served others in the past?

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## Week 4 | Serve Like Jesus

### Day 1

## Serve for the Sake of the Gospel

### ■ Mark 8:34-38

*Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life[a] will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”*

Jesus predicted His sufferings as the shadow of the cross was looming large (v. 31). He knew that the Jews would not expect the Messiah to suffer or die. He therefore taught His disciples three times on the cost and significance of being a Messiah (See 8:34-38; 9:31; 10:33). He started by teaching the crowd and His disciples: “whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (v. 34).

Jesus wants His disciples as well as believers today to understand that following Him and taking up the cross are two sides of a coin. In the original text, the word “deny” means “renounce, reject, relinquish”. Self-denial is not an act of self-disapproval, but rather an act of self-surrender to God. This means that I am no longer the center of my life and living. The cross was a capital punishment tool at that time. Taking up the cross means to consider oneself dead in front of God and surrender one’s life to Him. For me to follow Jesus, I must take up my cross to follow. In other words, I must give up my selfishness and self-centeredness, and obey the Lord’s command to deny myself for others. Serving is this very act of renouncing oneself and bearing the cross to follow Him.

Why all these? Jesus clearly teaches: “For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it” (v. 35). Losing one’s life means to both deny oneself

and to take up one's cross, as referred to in the previous verse. Some people commit to following Jesus' example of sacrifice and dedication for the gospel. Therefore, they are willing to give up their aspiration, pleasure and interests, even ready to suffer for the Lord despite inconveniences and challenges. To them, serving others is a mean to serving the Lord. So, what would this attitude lead to? Jesus said, a person who lives his life this way "will save his life". Are you prepared to commit yourself to following Jesus' way to serve others? Are you willing to take up the challenge of the gospel mission?

Next, Jesus challenges us: "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul" (v. 36). If we gain the whole world, our return is temporary joys, yet we lose our eternal lives and destroy our souls. Comparing the two, which one is better for us? Besides, if we choose to love this world but lose our lives, the real us, what good is there? What can a man give in exchange for his soul (v. 37, The Message)? With this understanding in mind, we should not be shameful of the gospel, but rather be joyful in serving Him, testifying for His glory. This is indeed our wisest choice as we live in this crooked and bizarre generation.

### Reflection:

**Do I live for myself and set my goal to gain the world or do I let the Lord use me for His gospel? Which is more worthwhile and more meaningful to me and to others? Am I willing to pay the price for the Lord and for the sake of His gospel?**

### Prayer:

*Holy Spirit, teach me to invest my life in eternity and make good use of my time and resources actively sharing the gospel. Help me to do all these with joy and glorify God at home, at school, at work, at church and in the neighbourhood for Your glory. Amen.*

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## Week 4 | Serve Like Jesus Day 2

### Serve to Sacrifice

#### ■ Mark 10:35-45

*Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask."*

*"What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.*

*They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."*

*"You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said.*

*"Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"*

*"We can," they answered.*

*Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared."*

*When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

One day, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus and said, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask. Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory." (vv. 35-36) These two brothers sought to have the highest prominence and honor just next to the throne of Jesus in His glorious kingdom of the Messiah. But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup I drink, or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?" (v. 38) "We can," they answered without hesitation (v. 39).

Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized

with, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared.” (vv. 39-40) When the other ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. Jesus then called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (vv. 42-45)

In response to the request of James and John to sit on his right and left for personal interest, Jesus said, “You do not know what you are asking.” He considered it as a worldly maneuvering for glory and position and a failure to understand His repeated instruction on the cost of true discipleship. Do not be too quick to condemn James and John for their selfish ambition, but check our own heart and motives for serving God. We are no better. Selfish ambition is not exclusive to a pursuit for worldly fame, glory and wealth. It may also exist within Christian service or ministries when one strives for personal glory and gain. Even the twelve disciples of Jesus had persistently argued about which of them was the greatest (See Mark 9:34) resulting in jealousy, envy, bitterness, anger and resentment.

People seek to rise to prominent positions of power and authority, but Jesus told His disciples not to follow their footsteps. Lord Jesus was not telling us not to respect authority, but instead taught us to take a spiritual perspective on it. Jesus reminded His disciples to serve with the humble attitude of a servant (v. 43) for there is no place in the church for worldly domineering leaders (v. 42). As His disciples, we have to be servant of all (v. 44) and follow Jesus example of selfless sacrificial servant leadership, for even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many (v. 45). God is always more interested in our heart and attitude than what we do for Him. Greatness in God’s kingdom is not measured by our position of prominence but by our selfless humility and our willingness to be a servant of all! In the Kingdom of God, it is serving and self-sacrifice that count.

## Reflection:

**As a servant leader who seeks to imitate Christ, am I willing to sacrifice my time, energy, wealth and status, to leave my comfort zone and serve others for the sake of the Gospel?**

## Prayer:

*Holy Spirit, empower me to follow Christ’s footsteps, to serve selflessly and sacrificially; not to seek for power, authority, personal gain and glory, but to be a faithful humble servant of God. Amen.*

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## Week 4 | Serve Like Jesus

### Day 3

## Serve to Give Jesus the Best

### ■ Mark 14:3-9

*While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.*

*Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, “Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year’s wages[a] and the money given to the poor.” And they rebuked her harshly.*

*“Leave her alone,” said Jesus. “Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”*

While Jesus was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head (v. 3). Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, “Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold

for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor" (vv. 4-5). They rebuked her harshly.

"Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her" (vv. 6-9).

Did Mary (See John 12:3) see the criticism coming when she anointed Jesus with the expensive pure nard that other thought was too lavish? She seemed to not care about others' reactions. For the sake of loving Jesus, she would not mind if people misunderstood her.

From Mary's example, we learn three attitudes in serving the Lord: (1) Mary gave her most precious to the Lord. The perfume was worth more than 300 denarii (v. 5), equivalent to a worker's yearly wage. Can you see from her act that she valued the Lord more than the jar of perfume? Money does not mean much to one who loves the Lord. Do we treasure Him in the same way as Mary?

(2) By breaking the jar, Mary knew that she would not be able to preserve any left-over but she chose not to save any for herself. Are we willing to yield completely to the Lord? Are we willing to offer everything for the sake of loving Him? Are we willing to pour out our money, time and effort to serve the Lord, even to the point of facing criticism, blame and accusation?

(3) Mary loved Jesus without reservation, as evident in her lavishly pouring all she had on His head. Would we offer our best to Jesus, knowing that He deserves it all? In contrast, the disciples were making indignant remarks (See Matt. 26:8) to Mary for her act of love. When others love and passionately serve the Lord, do I criticize them?

### Reflection:

**Am I willing to sacrifice for the Lord without holding back, materially and spiritually? Would I love the Lord without reservation because nothing is too precious for Him? My love of the Lord, thirst for His truth, faithfulness in serving and commitment to your spiritual growth may draw criticism and misunderstanding, especially to people who do not identify with my faith. Regardless, Jesus is my**

**ultimate pursuit. How would I serve to give Jesus the best?**

### Prayer:

*Holy Spirit, teach me to love Jesus without reservation and offer my best to Him. Amen.*

---

## Week 4 | Serve Like Jesus

### Day 4

## Serve as a Humble Servant

### Mark 9:33-37

*They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the road?" But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.*

*Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all."*

*He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me."*

Jesus and His disciples came to Capernaum. When He was in the house, He asked them, "What were you arguing about on the road?" They were silent because they were debating who was the greatest (vv. 33-34). None of the disciples responded since they did not want Jesus to know that their subject of argument was about "who was the greatest". Perhaps they were so embarrassed, that they could not respond in words.

Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all" (v. 35). Jesus then took a little child, whom he placed among them, in His arms and said to them, "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me" (v. 37).

Man has a natural inclination to want himself to be the first and above all. However, how Jesus

sees the greatest and the least are different from that of the disciples. Like us, the disciples thought that position and power would make someone great. Yet, Jesus gave a totally new standard for His followers, not based on position nor power, but rather to question ourselves: are we more humble than others? Are we willing to serve others? Are we not despising even the least? Are we serving others for the sake of the Lord?

Jesus wants us and the disciples to know that only those who have the humility to serve others are true leaders of the church. He led a child to their midst and took him in His arms to show that anyone who has the humility of a child is the greatest in heaven. Not only is humility key for Christians who serve, but also is it a basic requirement for entering the Kingdom of God (See Mark 10:15). What the Lord asks of us is indeed completely opposite to that of our own value system. "For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted" (Luke 18:14), which is the spiritual principle in the Kingdom of God: just like Jesus who "humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place" (Phil. 2:8-9). Are we willing to learn from our Lord and serve others with humility?

Jesus also pointed out that whoever cares, accepts, serves and helps the needy and vulnerable in His name or for His glory is doing it for Him (See Mark 9:36-37, Matt. 10:42; 25:40). Let us remember that humility does not come naturally to us, but is through discipline. So let us follow Jesus' humble serving attitude in serving: for the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve (Mark 10:45).

### Response:

**Examine my mind-set in serving. Do I enjoy being in charge or am I willing to share the burden of others at home, at work, and at church? This week, when I show courtesy and appreciation with love to people I encounter in the service industry, like cashiers and restaurant servers, will they think differently about themselves and about me?**

### Prayer:

*Lord Jesus, help me not to be arrogant or proud; but to serve humbly like You – be a servant to others. Amen.*

---

## Week 4 | Serve Like Jesus

### Day 5

## Serve with Complete Obedience to God

### ■ Mark 15:25-39

*It was nine in the morning when they crucified him. The written notice of the charge against him read: the king of the jews.*

*They crucified two rebels with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself!" In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.*

*At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?").*

*When some of those standing near heard this, they said, "Listen, he's calling Elijah."*

*Someone ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down," he said.*

*With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.*

*The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"*

The crucifixion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross is God's plan of salvation for all mankind; it exemplifies the complete obedience of our Lord to His Father. He was betrayed by His disciple (See Mark 14:45-46), mocked and tortured by soldiers, put on a crown of thorns (See Mark 15:15-20), and ultimately nailed on the cross at Golgotha.



Hung on the cross for six long hours (vv. 25, 33), Jesus was bruised and rejected. Those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, “Ha! You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross.” In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes, were mocking Him among themselves and saying, “He saved others; He cannot save Himself (vv. 29-31). They thought that if Jesus were the Son of God, He would have the power to save Himself and His father would not let His own son die on the cross. They could not comprehend God’s plan of salvation being accomplished through the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ, who was declared the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead (See Rom. 1:4).

Jesus remained silent throughout the trial and ridicule. In the last three hours, in agony of abandonment by God, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (v. 34) Darkness came over the whole land from the sixth hour until the ninth hour (v. 33), for the darkness of our sins has hidden God’s face from us. Jesus Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree; He died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring us to God (See 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18). God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21). God had judged the world through the substitutionary death of Christ on the cross – Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us, forsaken by His righteous Father. He bore our iniquities and made atonement for our sins (Ps. 22:1).

At the ninth hour, with a loud cry, Jesus breathed His last (v. 37). At the time of Jesus’ death on the cross, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom (v. 38). The curtain has been viewed as symbolic of Jesus’ torn body for our sin. A new and living way was opened for us through the torn curtain, that is, His broken body. Through Him, we can enter the house of God without fear. Through his death, we can approach the throne of grace, receive His mercy and grace in time of our need (See Heb. 10:19-20; 4:16).

## Reflection:

**To fulfill God’s plan of salvation, Jesus surrendered His all to God the Father, even unto death on the cross. Jesus, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross! (Phil. 2:6-9) God wants you to be a humble servant like Christ. How can I cultivate the mind of Christ to humbly and sacrificially serve God and others?**

## Prayer:

*Holy Spirit, teach me how to serve with the mind and spirit of Christ; to surrender myself to God in complete humility and obedience like my Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

---

## Week 4 | Serve Like Jesus

### Small Group Sermon Response Discussion Guide

*This guide aims to help you to review, personalize and apply the sermons, along with the weekly featured articles and the devotion readings.*

#### 1. Review the Sermon (15 minutes)

- a. Can you think of a question that you believe the sermon message was trying to address or resolve?  
Share your question with the group.

.....

How did the speaker answer this question through the sermon message?  
How did the featured article help in answering this question?

.....

- b. Which attributes of God were stated or implied by the sermon message?

.....

- c. If you were tasked to give a one minute summary of the sermon message for a group member who was absent, what would you say?

.....

#### 2. Personalize the Sermon (20 minutes)

- a. What did you hear that encouraged and reassured you?

.....

- b. What did you hear that challenged and convicted you?

.....

#### 3. Apply the Sermon (20 minutes)

- a. What personal application of the message has the Lord revealed to you?

.....

How can you apply this message and integrate the “Weekly Challenges” into your life?

.....

- b. If you were to diligently apply the message, what effect would it have on your schedule, choices, relationships, ministries, and daily walk with Christ?

.....

# Share God's Story & Our Stories

*Over the past 4 weeks, we have learned how to come near to God and ask Him to show us whom we are to bless, through worship and prayer. We have also learned how to listen to others in order to start blessing them, to give blessings through eating together relationally, to care for them, and to serve them. The last element in our Called to B.L.E.S.S. journey is Story Sharing. Through listening, eating together, and serving, we can bring blessings to others; but most important of all is to introduce God to them, and make God a part of their lives. In order to do this, we will need to know how to share three types of stories:*

- 1) the Story of God's Redemptive Plan
- 2) the Story of Salvation through Grace
- 3) the Story of a Disciple's Life

## The Story of God's Redemptive Plan

Scripture says, "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect ..." (1Pet. 3:8) Each and every one of us who are disciples of Jesus should learn how to equip oneself to share the gospel, and tell the story of God's redemptive plan. This story comprises God's creation, the fall of Man, God's sending of His only Son Jesus Christ to be born, the coming of the Kingdom of God, the redemption by Jesus Christ's suffering on the cross, His resurrection on the third day after His death according to prophecy, the day of His return, and the coming of the New Heaven and New Earth.

## The Story of Salvation through Grace

God blesses us by giving us eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ. Each and every one of us who follow the Lord has a story of being redeemed

through grace. This story comprises three main aspects:

1. our condition before we receive Christ;
2. the reason for receiving Christ and what I did; and
3. the changes in me after receiving Christ.

We believe that the gospel has the power to change lives, because Jesus Christ is the resurrected and victorious Lord and God. Therefore our lives will be transformed through the work of the Holy Spirit after we have received Christ. We ought to reflect thoughtfully about what God has done for us. Non-Christians are immensely interested in knowing how our lives have been transformed by the power of God.

Note: If you were brought up in church and received Jesus in your childhood, you can ask yourself: at what age you began to embrace your own faith and not just adopting your parents' beliefs? Under what circumstances did you develop this experience of faith?



## The Story of a Disciple's Life

Apart from the story of your redemption through grace, we certainly have many other life stories to share. This is because the Lord works in and through our lives every day. The will of God is that we become disciples who obey His will. Therefore, before we see the way God works through our lives, we will need to know the special qualities of a disciple. Jesus has personally taught how a true disciple should live. The following are five special qualities of a disciple of Jesus:

### A. Loves Jesus Above All

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes, even his own life – he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26).

### B. Loves and Obeys the Word of God

"To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples'" (John 8:31).

### C. Jesus is the Lord

“Then he said to them all, ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me’” (Luke 9:23).

## D. Love One Another

“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35).

## E. Blessed to Bless

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ... This is to my Father’s glory that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. ... You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name” (John 15:5, 8, 16).

The bearing of fruit is God’s giving of His blessings and grace to us. Therefore, as long as we are planted in Him, we will bear fruit for Him (See Ps. 1:2-3). Not only will our lives bear fruit (See Gal. 5:22-23), but also we will bless others by yielding fruits of the gospel.

The following chart will help us take note of how God works through our lives:

## Life Stories of a Disciple – Types

Every area of life is an occasion for God to mould us into a disciple. We can make sense of the purpose of our life stories as what God uses to remind and help us raise the special qualities of our lives as a disciple. As we turn our attention to the qualities of discipleship such as: Love Jesus Above All; Obey the Word of God, and Take Jesus as Lord of My Life (2nd column of chart), we will be mindful of the stories related to these areas of life, such as Obey and Follow; Worship and Serve; and Triumph through Faith, and Thirsty for God’s Word. As we turn our attention to the qualities of being blessed by God to bear fruit (3rd column of chart), we will be mindful of the following related areas of life, such as Redemption Through Grace; God’s Provision; God’s Protection; God’s Strengthening; God’s Grace; and Prayers Answered. As we turn our attention to the qualities of Loving Each Other and Blessing Others (4th column of chart), we will be mindful of the following related areas of life, such as Gospel Sharing; Caring prayers; Helping Others; Forgiving Each Other; and Reconciliation with Others.

Therefore, let us not focus on only one aspect of our stories, but be more comprehensive. Often we emphasize our being blessed by God, and

<b>Special Qualities of discipleship</b>	Loves Jesus above all; Obeys the Word of God; Takes Jesus as Lord of my life.	Blessed by God (bear fruit).	Love each other; Bless others.
<b>Types of Life Stories</b>	Obey and follow; Worship and serve; Triumph through faith; Thirsty for God’s Word.	Redemption through grace; God’s provision; God’s protection; God’s strengthening; God’s grace; Prayers answered.	<b>Blessing Others:</b> Gospel Sharing; Caring prayers  <b>Helping others:</b> Forgive each other; Reconcile with others.

forget other categories such as Love Jesus Above All; Obey God's Word; and Jesus is Lord of My Life. Please note that every big or small story of a disciple's life can manifest God's work, and help others to sense the power, kindness and faithfulness of God.

If we have not fully mastered the art of telling God's story, please enroll for training, so as to enable us to have a part in the mission of blessing others.

### Weekly Challenge:

- Pray for and commit to sharing your life story with at least one non-believer. Remember to take this opportunity to share the work God has done in your life through Jesus Christ

### Reflection:

As God works in our lives all the time (every minute and every second), let us ask God to give us the Spirit of revelation, so that we may know His wonderful acts, and so that our lives may impact other lives.

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## Week 5 | Share God's Stories and Our Stories

### Overview

This week, you will explore ways to discover God's unique work in your life, through devotion and the "Life Discovery" Exercise. Since your personal narrative is part of God's grand narrative, who you are and what God has done in your life matters immeasurably in God's community and in our roles to bless others.

Over the next five days, begin by meditating on Scripture, then spend time in prayer as you seek the Holy Spirit's guidance to discover more about yourself. Next, go through the 5-step "Life Discovery" Exercise to help you write down your stories. The goal is not to rush through to completion but to discern deeply. Try to slow down the rhythm of your life to create space for God. Remember, only God is able search through your life because He is the author of life.

Be sure to close each step with the soul exercise which will help to draw you closer to God and to

gain a deeper understanding of Him. We encourage you to engage in the "Life Discovery" Exercise daily until completion, though it may take you up to 2 to 3 weeks. Do not give up as your will see your life journey being enriched after completion of these exercises.

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## Week 5 | Share God's Stories and Our Stories | Day 1

### God Searches through My Life

#### ■ Psalm 139:1-12

*You have searched me, Lord,  
and you know me.*

*You know when I sit and when I rise;  
you perceive my thoughts from afar.*

*You discern my going out and my lying down;  
you are familiar with all my ways.*

*Before a word is on my tongue  
you, Lord, know it completely.*

*You hem me in behind and before,  
and you lay your hand upon me.*

*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,  
too lofty for me to attain.*

*Where can I go from your Spirit?  
Where can I flee from your presence?*

*If I go up to the heavens, you are there;  
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.*

*If I rise on the wings of the dawn,  
if I settle on the far side of the sea,*

*even there your hand will guide me,  
your right hand will hold me fast.*

*If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me  
and the light become night around me,"*

*even the darkness will not be dark to you;  
the night will shine like the day,  
for darkness is as light to you.*

God has searched us! He knows us inside out, including our thoughts. Spend time to meditate on this Scripture and ask God to search through every

moment of our life. Let God lead us and hold our hands everywhere you go!

### “Life Discovery” Exercise:

Complete step 1 on page 44.

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## Week 5 | Share God’s Stories and Our Stories | Day 2

### God Authors My Life

#### ■ Psalm 139:13-24

*For you created my inmost being;  
you knit me together in my mother’s womb.*

*I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully  
made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*

*My frame was not hidden from you  
when I was made in the secret place,  
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.*

*Your eyes saw my unformed body;  
all the days ordained for me were written in your  
book before one of them came to be.*

*How precious to me are your thoughts,[a] God!  
How vast is the sum of them!*

*Were I to count them,  
they would outnumber the grains of sand—  
when I awake, I am still with you.*

*If only you, God, would slay the wicked!  
Away from me, you who are bloodthirsty!*

*They speak of you with evil intent;  
your adversaries misuse your name.*

*Do I not hate those who hate you, Lord,  
and abhor those who are in rebellion against you?*

*I have nothing but hatred for them;  
I count them my enemies.*

*Search me, God, and know my heart;  
test me and know my anxious thoughts.*

*See if there is any offensive way in me,  
and lead me in the way everlasting.*

#### ■ James 1:16-18

*Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. Every  
good and perfect gift is from above, coming down  
from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not  
change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us  
birth through the word of truth, that we might be a  
kind of firstfruits of all he created.*

God is faithful, God is good and God is never  
changing! Though we may think that God began  
authoring our life at the moment we accepted  
Christ, He actually began His work even before we  
were aware of His presence. By introducing people  
and events into our life, God paved each step on  
the way to drawing us close to Him. In fact, the  
essence of this “Life Discovery” Exercise is to guide  
us to experience and affirm the truth that nothing  
in our life happens apart from Him. God has begun  
the first chapter of our life story on the day of our  
conception (See Ps. 139:13-16). Thereafter, He has  
never ceased to look after us and to prepare the  
very best for us (See Jas. 1:16-18).

### “Life Discovery” Exercise:

Begin step 2 on page 45.

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## Week 5 | Share God’s Stories and Our Stories | Day 3

### God has a Great Plan for Me

#### ■ Hebrews 11

*Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and  
assurance about what we do not see. This is what the  
ancients were commended for.*

*By faith we understand that the universe was formed  
at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made  
out of what was visible.*

*By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain  
did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when  
God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still  
speaks, even though he is dead.*

*By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did  
not experience death: “He could not be found, because  
God had taken him away.”[a] For before he was taken,*

he was commended as one who pleased God. And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

... (vv. 39-40) Not one of these people, even though their lives of faith were exemplary, got their hands on what was promised. God had a better plan for us: that their faith and our faith would come together to make one completed whole, their lives of faith not complete apart from ours.

This passage paints a picture of the many faith heroes across all generations who have anchored their faith in God. However, at the end of the passage, the author reminds us, “Not one of these people, even though their lives of faith were exemplary, got their hands on what was promised. God had a better plan for us: that their faith and our faith would come together to make one completed whole, their lives of faith not complete apart from ours.” (Heb. 11:39-40, The Message)

God has a great plan for us as a community of faithful followers of His. Our faith comes together to make one completed whole. Like puzzle pieces, He puts us together with the purpose to exemplify and glorify Him. Remembering this picture will help us to remain steadfast in our faith even at times when our vision on His promises is not clear. Trust in the promise that God has planned something better for us!

### “Life Discovery” Exercise:

*Continue to work on the current step until completion.*

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## Week 5 | Share God’s Stories and Our Stories | Day 4

### God is Faithful to Me

#### ■ Deuteronomy 7:1-13

When the Lord your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations—the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you— 2 and when the Lord your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them

totally.[a] Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy. 3 Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, 4 for they will turn your children away from following me to serve other gods, and the Lord’s anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you. 5 This is what you are to do to them: Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones, cut down their Asherah poles[b] and burn their idols in the fire. 6 For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession...

By God’s sovereignty and grace, He has chosen the Israelites to be His treasured possession and has kept His covenant of love with them forever (vv. 7-9). Though they were unfaithful to Him at times, God has always kept His faithfulness.

By faith, we are children of Abraham, hence children of God (See Gal 3:7-9) at the moment we accepted the redeeming love of Christ at the cross. God loves us and His faithfulness endures. Spend a moment to reflect on God’s faithfulness at every stage of our life and give thanks to Him!

### “Life Discovery” Exercise:

*Continue to work on the current step until completion.*

---

## Week 5 | Share God’s Stories and Our Stories | Day 5

### God Knows Me better than I Do

#### ■ Jeremiah 1:4-8

*The word of the Lord came to me, saying,*

*“Before I formed you in the womb I knew[a] you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”*

*“Alas, Sovereign Lord,” I said, “I do not know how to speak; I am too young.”*

*But the Lord said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am too young.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you,” declares the Lord.*

God has a mission for everyone, even though we may think that we are not worthy or capable to be a part of His mission. God knew us before we were formed in the womb and He consecrated us before we were born (v. 5). So, do not be afraid to step into this mission as the Holy Spirit is always there to guide us!

In your “Life Discovery” Exercise, we will discover that God has been shaping our life to fit His purpose. God’s grace has been with us since we were born. Our mission is to bring blessings by sharing our life stories to witness His faithfulness.

### “Life Discovery” Exercise:

*Continue to work on the current step until completion.*

## Week 5 | Share God’s Stories and Our Stories

### Step 1: Identifying the Chapters of Your Life

Divide your life into logical time sequences from birth to the present. You can divide your life into as many as seven sections, but you may find that your life divides best into fewer sections. The table below shows example of life division scheme and provides room to brainstorm life division scheme. Use the numbered spaces to write division titles. You may choose to divide your life into time sequences based on age, periods of school and work, geographic locations, or other arrangements you find appropriate. These divisions mark the various chapters of your story.

Life Division Scheme Example	Life Story Chapters Scheme
1. 0-11 (Primary School)	
2. 12-17 (High School)	
3. 18-28 (Young Adults, Accepted Christ)	
4. 29-38 (Married Life)	
5. 39 -58 (Immigrated to Canada)	
6. 59-65 (Empty Nester)	

Pay special attention to the year that you had accepted Christ. You have now chosen the major sections that will provide the basic structure of your story.

### Soul Exercise: Resting

God is concerned about you holistically, including your mind, your body and your soul. They are unified and cannot be separated. It is hard for you to pursue a closer relationship and a deeper understanding of God’s work in your life when you have a tired body. If you are tired or weary, you must slow down the pace of your life and rest. This will create room for God to dwell deeper in you.

This week, try to discipline yourself to spend more time in rest. Resting is a sign of you trusting in God’s sovereignty and allowing Him to take good care of you. May you find rest in Him!

You have already determined the chapter divisions of your story. Think through the experiences and relationships that correspond to each life division, proceeding through this brainstorming process slowly and methodically. As you do this exercise, you are finding an answer to the fundamental question “What key relationships and experiences have made up my life?” The following information on what we call the 4Hs (Heritage, Heroes, High Points, Hard Times) will help you answer this question. Use “Life Discovery” chapter worksheet on page 51 to record your answers to the following discoveries. As you need one worksheet for each life story chapter, please photocopy the page for recording your story. Please use English worksheet to the picture on the right.



## **Step 2: Identifying the Characters and Events of Your Story**

### **Heritage**

Heritage is the combined influences from our past that God has used to write our stories, to mold us, and to bring us where we are today. It includes family influences, geography, natural gifting, genetics, and temperament. It all makes up our identity.

- How have my parents or primary caregivers influenced me?
- What was the general atmosphere in my home as I grew up?
- How have my ethnicity and culture played an important role in my life?
- What have my peer relationships been like over the years? Why?
- How have geographical factors influenced me?

### **Heroes**

Heroes are people who make a distinctly positive impression on your life through words or actions. They can be nearly anyone: a parent, relative, neighbor, teacher, friend, or coach. Heroes also can be people you have never met, such as political leaders or historical figures. Somehow, heroes touch you in life-changing ways.

Some questions to ask as you think through this category are:

- Who has influenced me for good? How did they specifically do so?
- After whom would I like to model my life? Why?
- Who inspires me? Why?
- Who has shaped my character or direction in life? How? Why?

### **High Points**

High points are often the best and most fulfilling seasons or experiences of your life. These times might include winning a district championship, making the honor roll, receiving an award, going on a vacation, visiting a long-distance friend, having a year of peace in the home, enjoying two years at a great job, or getting married. Some questions to ask as you think through this category are:

- What accomplishments have brought me fulfillment or special recognition? How? Why?
- What events or people have brought me great joy?
- At what points in my life did I feel particularly good about life? Why?
- When have I made my greatest contributions to life or others? How?

### **Hard Times**

Hard times are those relationships or seasons in our lives that were particularly difficult or painful. An example might be a childhood move from one school to another that was hard and caused us to build up some defensive walls that have been difficult to break down ever since. Perhaps there has been a relationship split that has not been restored. Some questions to ask as you think through this category are:

- What incidents in my life are hard to talk about with others? Why?
- Who or what has been a source of pain in my life? When? Why?
- Toward whom do I harbor anger or bitterness? Whom do I struggle to forgive? Why?
- What has brought me great disappointment? Why?
- Through what injustices have I had to suffer?
- To what addictions or abuse have I been exposed either in my own life or in the lives of others?

Write down all your thoughts on the “Life Discovery Chapter” worksheets. Use one worksheet to reflect the 4Hs for each division of your life. As you look back over the years of your life, pray that

the Lord will help you remember the key elements that highlight God's authorship in your life.

### **Soul Exercise: Thanksgiving**

Set aside some time to spend expressing thanksgiving to God for the ways in which He has authored your life. Read back through your list of experiences and relationships to recall that for which you are thankful. You also may express your thanksgiving by contacting persons from your past and telling them how God has used them in your life.

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## **Week 5 | Share God's Stories and Our Stories**

### **Step 3: Discerning the Formative Elements of Your Story**

Next, you will categorize each formative experience or relationship. The following two sections define the labels you will be using. It would be helpful to read both sections before beginning the labeling process. This part of the "Life Discovery" Exercise will help you to discern the work of God in your life. If you get stuck during this discerning process, do not get frustrated. Just pause and pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance to reveal His work to you.

#### **Recognizing Meaning and Purpose in Your Story**

For each formative experience or relationship, use the following questions to try to determine the meaning and purpose behind each one:

How has the experience or relationship shaped me (my attitudes, perspectives, habits, or values)?

- What primary lesson have I retained from the experience or
- relationship?
- How did the experience or relationship affect my view of God? My view of people?
- Why did God bring it into my life?
- Where has it led me?

- What consequences—good or bad—came from it?

Write MP (Meaning and Purpose) beside any formative experiences and relationships for which you understand the significant meanings and purposes for your story. Jot down a note to help you remember the meaning and purpose you currently attach to the experience or relationship.

#### **Recognizing Faith Points in Your Story**

Working through the "Life Discovery" Exercise is an exercise of faith. You need faith at several levels. First, you need faith to say that God's work in your life has an overarching plot and that He wants you to reflect on it and grow in appreciating His providence. You need to believe the time invested in prayer, reflection, and writing is well worth the discoveries you will make.

You also need faith to move on with your story when you don't understand various elements in the plots. You may not be able to discern the meaning and purpose of some formative experiences and relationships. This difficulty is okay. Those experiences and relationships are "faith points." Though you cannot discern their meaning now, you choose to move on in faith, believing that God's sovereign work is trustworthy and His nature is good. Because you are looking at stories not yet complete, the faith points may eventually make sense as your story unfolds.

Your faith points may gain clarity in meaning and purpose as you patiently live out your story. However, some experiences and relationships may remain faith points throughout life. You may have to carry certain injustices, tragedies, and pains in faith forever without explanation. Although you may recognize some good from them, link certain outcomes in life to them, or find that ministry stems from them, the events may always be unanswered mysteries under God's sovereignty.

Where you cannot find meaning and purpose, you must find faith! Write FP (Faith Point) beside any formative experiences and relationships that are faith points for you. At this time in the exercise, each of your formative experiences and relationships should be labeled either MP or FP.

#### **Soul Exercise: Playing**

You may wonder why playing is a soul exercise. Though playing seems silly and is just for fun, it

actually engages randomness. Many unexpected and unpredictable things occur during play time. For example: how the ball bounces in a tennis game is unpredictable. You cannot predict the next move of your opponent. During play time, you learn to relax and to let go. You let unpredictable things come to you and you face them as they come along. James Bryan Smith points out that “Spontaneity is one of the spiritual benefits of play. We learn to let go. We relax, letting ourselves become vulnerable and open up to whatever happens. We play because our God is good. Grace is sufficient for us. God wants us to be full of joy, and play is a way to experience the goodness of God and the richness of life.” (Good and Beautiful Life, p.46). This week, let us learn to play with joy. Relax and let go!

<sup>1</sup>James Bryan Smith, *Good and Beautiful Life - Putting on the Character of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2010), 46.

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## Week 5 | Share God’s Stories and Our Stories

### Step 4: Learning about the Author and Main Character of Your Story

Once you have determined the formative experiences and relationships in your life, reflect on what you have learned from them about God and yourself. As you pray and meditate on each formative event, ask yourself the following questions:

1. As the Author of my life, what has God revealed about Himself through this relationship or experience?
  - His attributes
  - His character
  - His works
2. What has God revealed about me, the main character of my life, through this relationship or experience?
  - My temperament
  - My strengths

- My weaknesses
- My values

Use the answers that come to mind to fill in the “What I learn about God” and “What I learn about myself” sections of your “Life Discovery Chapter” worksheets.

### Soul Exercise: Meditation on the Scriptures

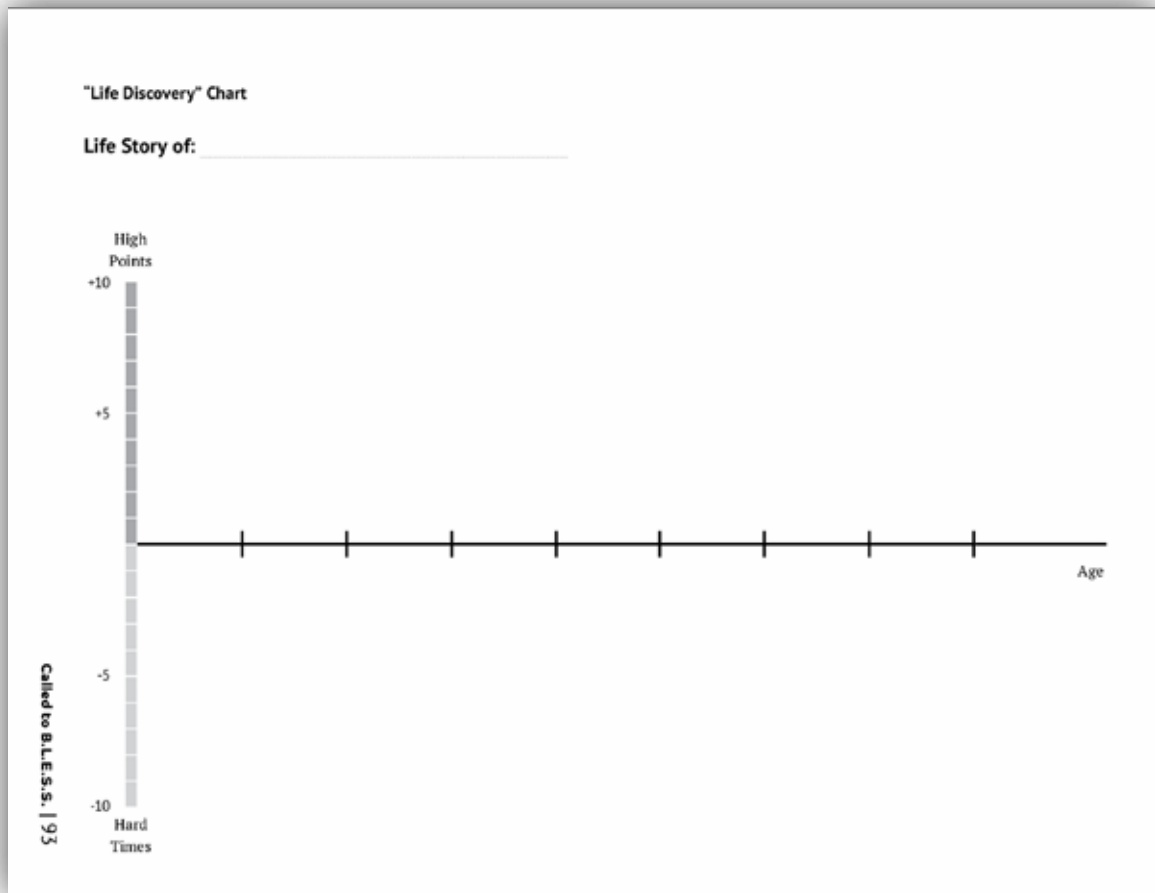
Spend some time reflecting on and looking up Bible verses that have had a significant influence on your life. Meditate on those verses and how God has used them to shape your view of Him, yourself, and the world. Note the verses and any thoughts about them below.

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## Week 5 | Share God’s Stories and Our Stories

### Step 5: Identifying Themes and Depicting Your Life Story Graphically

Now that you have gained significant understanding of the elements of your story as well as insight into God and yourself, ask yourself, *How do the different parts of my life relate to one another?* As you think of how various people, events, and lessons relate, you will discover the themes of your life story. In a work of literature, the theme is what the author seeks to communicate. The theme answers the question “What is this story about?” Themes are hard for many people to grasp. Keep people from thinking in terms of theme until they finish the process of identifying the most formative elements in their lives. After that, when they skim back over their findings, a few themes should emerge as issues they have faced consistently.



Plot the events of your story on a "Life Discovery" Chart on page 53, indicating High Points above the horizontal line and Low Points below it. Mark the MP (Meaning and Purpose) and FP (Faith Point) on your chart. You may reference the sample provided from Joseph in the Bible. His life's major themes were identified as "Leaning on My Earthly Father", "Leaning on My Heavenly Father", "Living with Wound", and "Healing with Reconciliation".

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## Week 5 | Share God's Stories and Our Stories

### Small Group Sermon Response Discussion Guide

*This guide aims to help you to review, personalize and apply the sermons, along with the weekly featured articles and the devotion readings.*

## 1. Review the Sermon (15 minutes)

- a. Can you think of a question that you believe the sermon message was trying to address or resolve? Share your question with the group.

.....

How did the speaker answer this question through the sermon message?  
How did the featured article help to answer this question?

.....

## 2. Apply the Sermon (60 minutes)

Your stories can bring blessings to others. Let us encourage each other to discover God's work in our lives and how He may use our life stories to bless. Use both the "Life Discovery" Chart and the "Life Discovery" Chapter Worksheets to present your sharing.

- a. Share one of your formative experiences and/or relationships that have meaning and purpose (one marked with "MP").

What did you learn about God?

.....

What did you learn about yourself?

.....

How did God impact and change your life?

.....

- b. Share one of your formative experiences and/or relationships that you do not fully understand but you trust God by faith (one marked with "FP").

How would you interpret this experience and/or relationship differently if Jesus Christ were not in your life?

.....

How is your life different now that you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?

.....

- c. Examine the sample "Life Discovery" Chart of Joseph who had experienced so many ups and downs in his life. Joseph initially did not understand the reasons behind the hurts and wounds that had inflicted him. Over time, he finally comprehended that God's work in him was meant to bring blessings to others. Joseph said, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives" (Gen. 50:20).

Now look through your "Life Discovery" Chart to share overall how God can use your life stories to bless others.

.....

- d. Pray for and commit to sharing your life stories with at least one nonbeliever friend. As you share your stories, answer the following important question:

"How did God impact and change your life?"

.....

Also, be attentive to opportunities to explain the gospel of Christ to him or her. Use the space below to write down the name of at least one nonbeliever with whom you will commit to sharing your life stories.

Nonbelievers to share my story with:

.....

## “Life Discovery” Chapter Worksheet

**Life Story of:** Joseph  
**Age** 17–30  
**Division:** Learning on My Heavenly Father

**Sample**

**Theme:**

	Experiences and Relationships	Notes
<b>Heritage</b> What geographical, ethnic, or family factors influenced you? How? Why?	I was sold to Egypt by my brothers. That began my first detrimental experience, after leaving my father who had loved and protected me to a great extent ever since I was born. (MP) (FP)	For the longest time, I could not grasp why this had to happen to me. However, this incident made me understand that ultimate love and protection comes only from the Lord, not from men.
<b>Heroes</b> What relationships played a positive key factor in influencing you?	I found favour in the eyes of Potiphar, my Egyptian master who entrusted me to everything in his household. (MP)	
<b>High Points</b> What experiences have you enjoyed the most? Why? What experiences illustrate your special abilities?	I became the top servant in his household. Only one man (Potiphar) was above me. (MP)  Although I was imprisoned, the Lord was with me and granted me favour in the eyes of my prison warden. He made me in charge of all other prisoners. I was successful in all I did. (MP) (FP)	As I reached the peak of my life, my trials also followed.  Regardless of the tough situation, I remained as a faithful servant. I still trusted in the Lord and submitted my life completely to Him.
<b>Hard Times</b> What experiences were especially painful? Why? How did they make you feel? How did they impact your life?	Potiphar's wife seduced me to go to bed with her but I refused to do so. She then falsely accused and incriminated me, causing me in prison. (FP)  I cared for the cupbearer and the baker of the king by interpreting dreams for them. I had high hope that the cupbearer would help me to get out of prison when his position was restored. How he disappointed me! (FP)	Why would I end up in the prison when I chose to revere the Lord and not sin against Him? I was puzzled and broken-hearted! How could my faith in the Lord lead to such sufferings and disappointments, one after another?
<b>What do I learn about God?</b>	As I submitted my life to the Lord, I fully experienced His mercy and faithfulness. His protection and providence was beyond what I could imagine. As I look back now, I understand that the Lord allowed trials in my life in order to sanctify me and strengthen my faith in Him. The Lord knew me well on how to break my old self and to rebuild me, all by His amazing grace!	
<b>What do I learn about myself?</b>	Before I was sold to Egypt, I was arrogant and self-centred. The Lord let me experience my brokenness when I was sold by my brothers, framed by my master's wife, and forgotten by the cup bearer. Just when I thought I had reached the peak of my life, it took a turn on the downward spiral. Looking back though, I thank the Lord for helping me walk through these difficult trials to shape my character. My focus turned from self to others. I began to care for the needs of the people around me. I also learned to trust and wait patiently for the Lord's deliverance. Though I had gone through so many ups and downs in my life, I have no regrets as I could not have been a blessing to others had God not taken me through this roller coaster journey!	

## "Life Discovery" Chapter Worksheet

**Life Story of:**

**Division:**

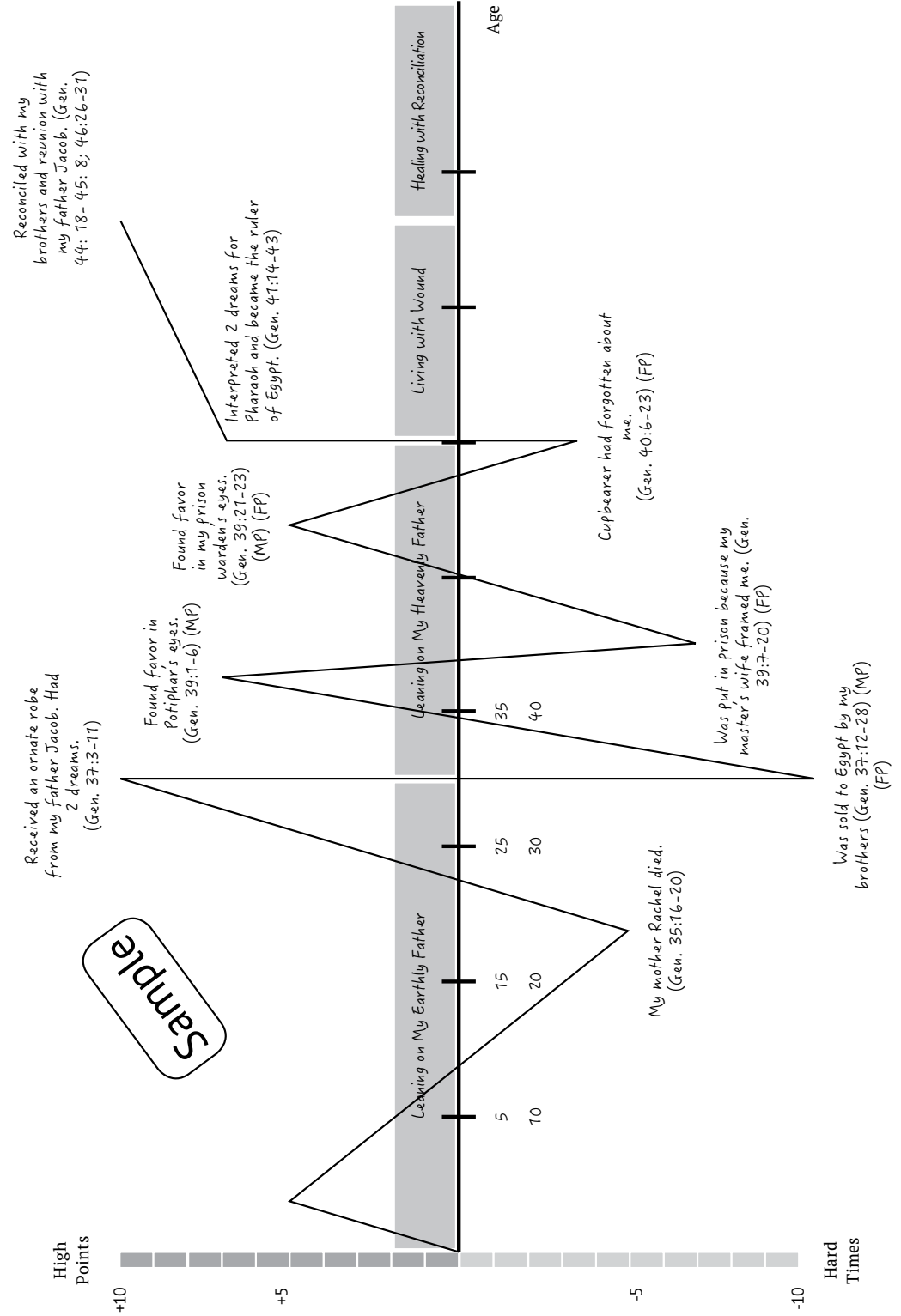
**Theme:**

	Experiences and Relationships	Notes
<b>Heritage</b> What geographical, ethnic, or family factors influenced you? How? Why?		
<b>Heroes</b> What relationships played a positive key factor in influencing you?		
<b>High Points</b> What experiences have you enjoyed the most? Why? What experiences illustrate your special abilities?		
<b>Hard Times</b> What experiences were especially painful? Why? How did they make you feel? How did they impact your life?		
<b>What do I learn about God?</b>		
<b>What do I learn about myself?</b>		

# "Life Discovery" Chart

Joseph (from birth to age 38)

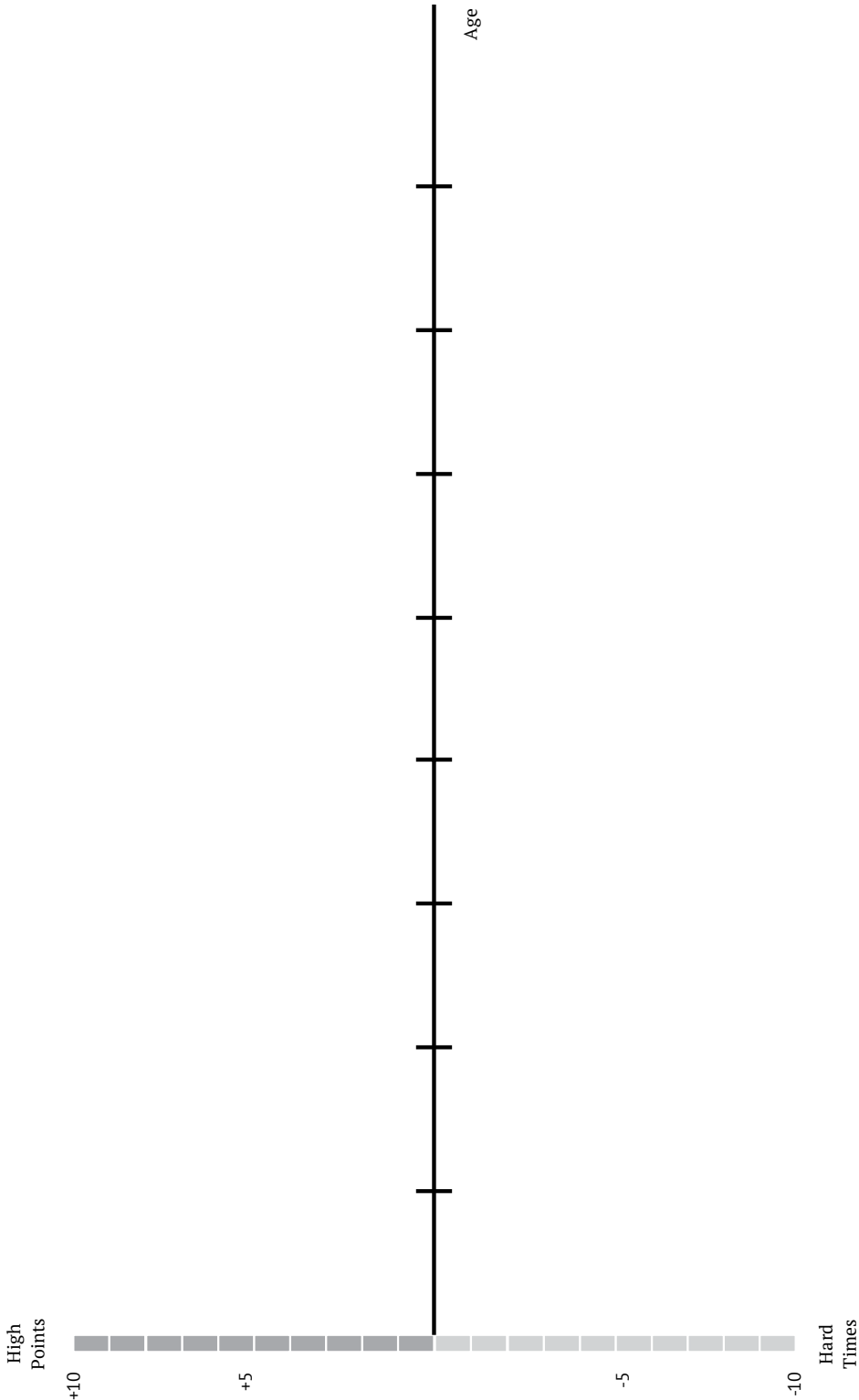
Life Story of:





“Life Discovery” Chart

Life Story of: \_\_\_\_\_



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## “Called to B.L.E.S.S.” Bible Study 1

### 📖 Matthew 9:35-10:1

## Introduction

Through His teaching (Kingdom proclamation) and His actions (Kingdom demonstration), Jesus has revealed His identity as the Messiah. His many miracles have also affirmed that the Kingdom is here. Since many are looking forward to the good news, Jesus has sent the disciples into the fields to harvest. As disciples of Jesus, we must learn to live out this compassion heart of Jesus in our lives, too.

Many teachings of Jesus were recorded in the Gospel of Matthew. Scholars, in general, group them into 5 separate discourses, known as the Five Discourses. The first discourse recorded in Matthew 5-7, is often referred to as “the Sermon on the Mount”. The passage we are studying today is the introduction leading to the second discourse in Matthew 10, “the Mission Discourse”.

At that time, Jesus had been preaching in Israel for quite some time. In Matthew 9:35, Jesus’ work was summarized in three aspects: teaching in the synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness. Immediately following that was the account of Jesus calling His twelve disciples to Him and giving them authority (Matt. 10:1). His purpose was to send them out to continue Jesus’ work in other areas of the land, and to bring blessings to more people.

## Think about it!

1. When Jesus saw the crowds, He had compassion on them. Have you ever experienced a time when you felt compassionate about someone? What was your response toward that person at the time?
2. What hinder(s) you from having compassion on people?

## Understand it well!

1. List the people who appeared in this passage. Apply the ‘Picture it!’ approach you learned in

“40 Days in the Word”, who do you see in the setting?

2. What comes to your mind when you read ‘Jesus went through all the towns and villages ...’ (Matt. 9:35)?
3. In Matthew 9:35, the author summarized Jesus’ work into teaching, proclaiming the good news and healing. What are the purposes and meanings of His work in each area?
4. After teaching His disciples to ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers (Matt. 9:39), Jesus gave them the authority and sent them out into the harvest field (Matt. 10:1). If God calls you to go out into His harvest field today, what would your response be?

## Live it out!

“The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” Where is the harvest field to which God sends you out to? Your family? Your neighbourhood? Your workplace? Your school?

Pray for courage and wisdom as you witness for Christ and to bless those you meet in your daily life.

## Conclusion

God’s mercy toward man is clearly demonstrated through Christ’s selfless sacrifice on the cross. In your life, you may not have experienced the level of compassion that Jesus had shown to others. Nevertheless, in this passage, Jesus commanded His disciples to “... Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” As His disciples, our responsibility is to pray earnestly to our Lord for Him to send out workers into His harvest field, so that more people can be brought to Christ to receive His grace and blessings!

When one sees the needs and start praying for the lost souls, God always calls this burdened soul to go and reap the harvest for Him. ***Are you willing?***

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## “Called to B.L.E.S.S.” Bible Study 2

### 📖 Romans 12:1-21

#### Introduction

The Book of Romans’ main teachings are found between Romans 1:1 and Romans 15:13, which can be divided into 2 main sections: the doctrinal section and the practical section. Chapters 1 to 11 emphasize on doctrinal teachings of God’s amazing grace and His redemptive story to show that nothing can separate us from the love of the Lord (Rom. 8:35). Chapter 12 to 15:13 outline the practical exhortations. Paul’s main purpose is to urge disciples to ‘live out their faith’. This includes showing mutual respect, acceptance and devotion in love within Christ’s body, treating non-believers with love, and not cursing those who persecute you. Paul also mentioned social responsibilities and believers’ submission to governing authorities established by God.

Jesus Christ had offered His body to God as a sacrifice of atonement, so that whoever believes in Him shall have eternal life. Therefore, Paul commanded the disciples “to offer their bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God”. Christ’s disciples should live a holy life. Totally commit ourselves to the Lord should be the response of every believer toward God’s grace of salvation, as well as our intention to live a life pleasing to the Lord. Nonetheless, pursuing after His will and His goodness in our lives is of utmost importance!

#### Think about it!

How would you describe your relationship with others, such as your family, your friends, your brothers and sisters in Christ, and your co-workers? What attitude or principle do you hold in your interpersonal relationship?

#### Understand it well!

1. Romans 12 can be divided into 3 sections. Try to list them out with a simple heading.
2. In the first section (vv. 1-2), Paul exhorted us “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. “. Paul started

the exhortation with “Therefore”. What are the reasons requiring you to offer your bodies? What does “to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice” mean?

3. Paul taught the disciples to live out the exhortation mentioned in v.1 in 2 aspects. List out these 2 aspects and explain what they mean to you.
4. In the second division (vv. 3-8), Paul reminded us, “Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, .. in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you”. What does this mean? Has this thought ever come across you while serving Him? Share what you went through your mind at that time.
5. In the second division (vv. 3-8), Paul listed out 7 spiritual gifts. What are they?
6. What spiritual gifts have God given you? How do you use them to serve in building up the body of Christ?
7. In the third division (vv. 9-21), Paul’s teachings focus on believers’ relationship with other people, both to the saved and to the unsaved. Paul explained this through a series of positive and negative examples. Read this section in details then share which exhortation(s) you find are most relevant to the theme of this Called to B.L.E.S.S. journey?
8. What does “heap burning coals on his head” mean? How did Paul teach disciples to relate with enemies (vv. 19-21)?

#### Conclusion

Romans 12:9-21 teaches us to love with sincerity. Paul stated in v.9 that “Love must be sincere”, which means that we must embrace each other with sincere love. This applies to your family, brothers and sisters in your Christian community, non-believers, and even your enemies. This passage consists of many positive and negative examples which Paul used to teach us what is good and what is evil. Ultimately, “overcome evil with good” is the principle to apply in interpersonal relationship that pleases the Lord.

God desires us to live out sincere love. When others see how we relate to each others in love, they will be attracted by His love; hence, be blessed by becoming His children. Are you willing to take up this challenge to live out sincere love (v. 9) for God?

**Called to B.L.E.S.S. | 55**

## APPENDIX C

### CALLED TO B.L.E.S.S. WORKBOOK (CHINESE)



# 蒙召祝福之旅 CALLED TO B.L.E.S.S.

Begin  
with Worship  
& Prayer



敬拜禱告

Listen  
Like Jesus



聆聽需要

Eat  
Missionally



使命聚餐

Serve  
Like Jesus



關懷服侍

Share  
God's and  
Our Stories



分享故事



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## 目錄

- 3 前言
- 3 致謝
- 3 引言
- 4 小組契約
- 4 如何善用此習作簿

### 第一週 敬拜禱告

- 5 敬拜禱告主題文章
- 7 靈修: 第一天——敬拜和使命
- 8 靈修: 第二天——緊密的聯繫
- 9 靈修: 第三天——先求祂的國
- 10 靈修: 第四天——憑信心禱告
- 11 靈修: 第五天——警醒和禱告
- 12 講道回應/小組討論——指引

### 第二週 聆聽需要

- 13 聆聽需要主題文章
- 15 靈修: 第一天——孤單的心
- 16 靈修: 第二天——絕望的心
- 17 靈修: 第三天——信靠的心
- 18 靈修: 第四天——哀傷的心
- 19 靈修: 第五天——順服的心
- 20 講道回應/小組討論——指引

### 第三週 使命聚餐

- 21 使命聚餐主題文章
- 23 靈修: 第一天——以恩慈去包容
- 24 靈修: 第二天——赴敵人的筵席
- 25 靈修: 第三天——疲倦時的邀請
- 26 靈修: 第四天——不吝嗇的款待
- 27 靈修: 第五天——無條件的接納
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- 33 靈修: 第四天——柔和謙卑
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- 37 分享神的故事和我們的故事 – 概要
- 38 靈修: 第一天——神鑒察我的生命
- 38 靈修: 第二天——神譜寫我的生命
- 39 靈修: 第三天——神給我的大計劃
- 39 靈修: 第四天——神以信實恩待我
- 40 靈修: 第五天——神認識我海般深
- 40 習作: 第一步——界定你生命的章程(「生命探索」習作)
- 41 習作: 第二步——界定你生命故事中的人和事
- 42 習作: 第三步——辨認形成你生命故事的元素
- 43 習作: 第四步——認識你自己及你生命故事的作者
- 44 習作: 第五步——界定主題及描繪你生命故事圖表
- 44 講道回應/小組討論——指引
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### 小組查經

- 50 查經一: 馬太福音9:35–10:1
- 51 查經二: 羅馬書12:1–21

## 前言

在城北華基，我們盼望能幫助信徒明白，信主就是作主的門徒，一生跟隨和事奉祂。門徒的生命就是：

1. 慶賀神在我們個人生命和教會中所賜的恩典
2. 連結兄弟一起成長，建立畢生的友誼，同心同行人生路
3. 貢獻自己的才能、時間、金錢去祝福他人，藉福音的大能，幫助他們回轉歸向神

蒙召祝福之旅 (Called To B.L.E.S.S.) 就是鼓勵門徒結出以上三方面的生命果子，讓每一位主的門徒都能找到神為他們早已預備的機會。藉著禱告、等候與建立關係，服侍他人及分享生命奇蹟，與朋友一起得著耶穌基督的祝福。「施比受更為有福」，讓我們齊來藉福音賜恩福！

## 致謝

何等恩典，神呼召我們一起事奉祂！我們真實地經歷到祂奇妙的引導，帶領「蒙召祝福」團隊齊心做祂為我們所安排美善之事工。「蒙召祝福之旅」的異象，源於本會教牧到新加坡的探訪交流，加上閱讀陳琛儀牧師介紹的《Discover Your Mission Now》一書後之構思，其後經禱告，蒙主肯定，再經教會內之傳道部、栽培部、關懷部及敬拜部門共同努力為這次旅程做好準備。我們希望這次旅程能幫助弟兄姐妹們探索如何活出我們為主而活的召命，在實踐中除了祝福別人，我們的生命成長得更像耶穌。

我們要感謝來自城北華基教會以外的支持：「蒙召祝福之旅」的基本架構是改編自芝加哥社區基督教會主任牧師Pastor Dave Ferguson撰寫的《Discover Your Mission Now》。我們感謝他慷慨地授予本教會權利使用他的書來幫助策劃這個旅程。此外，我們感謝達拉斯神學院的基督徒領導中心給予我們以下的使用權，用《Community – Discovering Who We Are Together》一書內的「生命的故事」(“Life Story”)，作為「蒙召祝福」旅程上「生命探索」習作的基本架構。

## 引言

「蒙召祝福之旅」，顧名思義，這是一個旅程，我們盼望兄弟姊妹在這段時間，一起學習如何活出使命人生。我們首先明白我們是蒙神呼召、深得祝福的人，然後我們倚靠神的恩典去學習祝福別人，好讓別人也同樣得到神的祝福。我們深信一生最美的祝福，就是認識主耶穌基督。今次蒙召祝福之旅的主要目的是幫助兄弟姊妹找到他們的福音使命。福音的工作不單要在教會進行，更要被帶進我們身邊的環境和人群當中。

B.L.E.S.S. 是一個縮寫，是蒙召祝福之旅的每週主題。

五大祝福要訣：

Begin with Worship and Prayer	敬拜禱告
Listen	聆聽需要
Eat Missionally	使命聚餐
Serve	關懷服侍
Share God's story and our stories	分享故事

福音的使命先以敬拜禱告開始，最終是將神恩典的故事和祂在我們生命中的恩典故事向別人述說。我們更會學習以聆聽需要，使命聚餐和關懷服侍來祝福我們身邊的人。最後，我們一起透過生命探索習作去看神在我們生命中的工作，我們會發現神是每分每秒都在祝福我們。

在蒙召祝福之旅的五個星期中，我們以講台信息、主題文章、靈修、討論，禱告和生命探索習作彼此鼓勵，活出福音使命去祝福別人。透過靈修，我們從《馬太福音》中學習耶穌的敬拜禱告，從《約翰福音》中學習耶穌的留心聆聽，從《路加福音》中學習耶穌的使命聚餐及從《馬可福音》中學習耶穌的關懷服侍。

最後，透過蒙召祝福之旅，兄弟姊妹：

1. 明白若要祝福別人，首先我們要知道自己是蒙神祝福的。我們要透過敬拜禱告，與神建立關係和尋找神要我們祝福的對象
2. 明白傳福音不單是把人帶到教會佈道聚會中，更要活出蒙神祝福的生命，把福音帶進我們的工作、家庭、學校和社區中
3. 發現神在我們生命的祝福，不斷與別人分享神的故事和自己的生命故事
4. 實踐五大祝福要訣：敬拜禱告、聆聽需要、使命聚餐、關懷服侍和分享故事

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## 小組契約

姓名：

小組組長：

透過以下的特徵，我們小組的目標是每個組員的靈命成長：

敬拜讚美(Celebrate)：我們共同承諾向神獻上讚美，感謝和祈禱，以此來慶賀這段門徒訓練的旅程。每個組員都承諾會預備時間去參加崇拜，讀聖經，閱讀主題文章和靈修資料，寫靈修日誌，並完成「生命探索」習作。

聯繫相交(Connect)：我們承諾互相接受，彼此問責與其他組員建立一個真誠的關係。每人要學習尊重和聆聽別人的故事並予以保密。每人都會致力尋找一個祈禱夥伴，得以在整個旅程中彼此勉勵和互相支持。

貢獻共享(Contribute)：我們致力運用自己的屬靈恩賜，去建立基督的身體，並祝福別人。

我們同意忠於出席未來五週的「蒙召祝福之旅」；如果因事未能出席，我們會致電告知組長。憑著信心，我們致力探索神在我們生命裡所作的工。靠著恩典，我們將繼續分享神的故事和我們個人的故事來祝福別人。

簽名

組員：

見證人：

組長：

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## 如何善用此習作簿

此習作簿包括五個星期的學習材料，用於你每週的「蒙召祝福之旅」；在每週的開始，請你先閱讀主題文章，隨後每天看靈修材料（星期一至星期五）。最後一週則有實用的「生命探索」習作。此簿內還包括兩套查經材料。

我們鼓勵你與小組的兄弟們共渡這個旅程，每週相聚一齊分享和思考每週的講道信息、主題文章和靈修材料。每週小組聚會完結之前，你可以互相鼓勵來參與每週挑戰，在個人及全組的層面上共同承擔神的使命。如果時間許可的話，大家可以在小組時間內研讀此習作簿內的兩套查經材料，否則，在這個旅程稍後的時間查考亦可。

第五週會有一個「生命探索」習作，它幫助你思考探索神在你生命裡所作的工。慢慢來去完成這個習作，即使需時長達數週，也沒關係。到旅程結束時，請緊記要分享你的生命故事，因為你的組員會因此而得到鼓舞和激勵。

此習作簿是用來引導你更深入地去探索神在你生命中的工作和祂給你的使命，並如何去祝福別人。請記住，這個生命更新變化的旅程纔剛剛開始，讓我們持守這些操練，從而被神所用，為祂長久不斷地結出果子！

此習作所引用的聖經經文，若非特別標明，皆為中文和合本。



## 第一週 主題文章

# 從敬拜和 禱告開始



從以弗所書看敬拜祈禱和活出使命人生去祝福別人

### 敬拜與活出使命人生

我們很多時候認為活出使命人生是為神作一些事情，特別是傳福音的工作。但原來神對我們的生命比我們的事奉更為看重。沒有生命的事奉就如摩天輪，只是不停的轉動，沒有目標和方向。

但是一個生命中充滿神恩典的人，事奉和敬拜是理所當然的回應。保羅說：「所以弟兄們，我以神的慈悲勸你們，將身體獻上，當作活祭，是聖潔的，是神所喜悅的；你們如此事奉(敬拜)乃是理所當然的。」(羅12:1)。一個活出使命人生的人，他深知神的恩典在他的生命發動，他被神向他施行的祝福大大感動。他最首先的回應不是為神作甚麼事情，而是敬拜施恩的主。

正如保羅在以弗所書說：「願頌讚歸與我們主耶穌基督的父神！他在基督裡曾賜給我們天上各樣屬靈的福氣」(弗1:3)。神在耶穌基督裡將各樣屬靈的福氣賜給我們，我們的回應便是敬拜。從敬拜當中我們記念神給我們的恩惠和祝福。保羅在以弗書第一章至第三章全是敬拜的經文，第一章是敬拜(Praise and Worship)；第二章是敬拜中的教導(Exhortation)；第三章是敬拜的回應和禱告——福音的使命(Mission)，而第三章最後一段是敬拜末段的祝福(Benediction)。保羅對三一真神的敬拜令他對自己的認識更加深。(參 弗1:3-14)

### 屬神的人是尊貴的 (Privileged)

在這個世界當中，很多尊貴的身份都是賺取回來，或人給予我們而希望得到的回報。但保羅深知道屬神的人是尊貴的，神無條件地和我們還未存在的時候，就是在創世以前在基督裡已揀選了我們，使我們在他面前成為聖潔，無有瑕疵。(參 弗1:4-5)

### 屬神的人是寶貴的 (Precious)

保羅深知道屬神的人是寶貴的，我們的生命是照著神豐盛的恩典，藉祂愛子耶穌基督的寶血得蒙救贖，過犯得以赦免。(參 弗1:7)



## 屬神的人是有生命意義的

### (Living with Purpose)

在保羅的敬拜中，他三番四次地說明神是按照祂的旨意成就祂在我們生命的工作(參 弗1:5,9-11)。顯然我們的生命不是偶然，而是在神的旨意當中滿有意義的。

## 屬神的人是安穩牢固的 (Protected)

我們從保羅的敬拜當中看到屬神的人有莫大的福氣，但是如果所有的福氣都會驟眼消失的話，那麼所有的祝福也是徒然的。但保羅知道我們一切的祝福在聖靈裡是安穩牢固的，因為聖靈是我們得基業的憑據。(參 弗1:14)

敬拜是一種互動關係，當我們看保羅在以弗所書第一章的敬拜，我們知道敬拜讓我們對神和自己的認識更加深，我們知道我們是尊貴的、寶貴的，有著生命意義的和安穩牢固的。這不單是頭腦上的認知，而是透過生活去經歷和認識神。每一個經歷都是一個活生生的故事。從敬拜中，我們思想神在我們每天生命的祝福，我們與神的關係亦因這些實在的經歷而深化。

這深化的關係就是我們活出使命人生的動力。我們不是不知道怎樣傳福音，事奉和活出使命人生，而是缺乏動力。因為我們心裡充滿懼怕和藉口，若沒有認知和經歷神給我們的祝福，我們從那裡有動力來回應神給我們的使命呢？所以敬拜和活出使命人生是息息相關的。難怪在敬拜後保羅說：「我為主被囚的勸你們：既然蒙召，行事為人就當與蒙召的恩相稱。」。(弗4:1)

## 禱告和活出使命人生

敬拜和禱告本來是息息相關的。保羅在以弗所書第一章和第三章有兩段禱文讓我們明白(參 弗1:15-23;3:14-21)在敬拜中應祈求神賜智慧和啟示的靈去知道，認識祂；知道祂給我們的盼望是何等的深厚；祂的榮耀是何等的豐盛和祂的能力是何等的浩瀚(參 弗1:17-18)。這是一個渴慕神的禱告，因為我們知道神的祝福和恩典是湧流不息地灌注在我們的生命當中，所以我們更加渴望經歷祂的榮耀和能力。在禱告當中我們看到神的偉大，亦同時看到我們自己的渺小和不配，但神卻按著祂極豐厚的恩典將我們完完全全的拯救過來(參 弗2)。從禱告中，神的榮耀能力和人的卑微軟弱就在這空間相遇，我們就要懷著感恩的心去禱告。但是，感

恩不是一個只在內心表達的禱告，而是願意將我們的生命獻給我們的主，任祂使用，所以保羅在第三章的禱告是一個以他生命來回應福音使命的禱告，神希望每一個屬祂的人都能夠成為福音使者。所以我們應該效法保羅的禱告，願意被神使用。祈求神好使我們能經歷耶穌基督的愛是何等長闊高深，祂的能力能使我們剛強起來。

活出使命人生去祝福別人是我們對神愛應有的回應，是神所喜悅的。但是活出使命人生的道路並不是靠人的立志和能力去完成，而是將我們的生命在禱告中完全順服交託給主，求神讓主耶穌基督的愛和能力充滿我們。求神打開祝福的門，將我們祝福的對象顯明給我們。像我們這樣不配的人卻得著祝福和蒙召，就應當靠神的恩典去祝福其他人，一同在神家裡享受神無窮盡的福氣。

## 反思

今天我是帶著怎樣的心態來敬拜禱告呢？是以旁觀者的心態？或是以渴望與神相遇，經歷祂祝福和等候被差遣的心態來到敬拜禱告呢？

## 每週挑戰

- 懷著尊崇、敬仰天父和期盼經歷神的心參加主日崇拜。
- 列出今年你要祝福的人的名字。
- 與弟兄姊妹組成一個三至四人的祈禱小組互相支持。

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## 第一週

### 從敬拜和禱告開始

#### 第一天

# 敬拜和使命

## ■ 馬太福音 4:1-11

當時，耶穌被聖靈引到曠野，受魔鬼的試探。他禁食四十晝夜，後來就餓了。那試探人的進前來，對他說：你若是神的兒子，可以吩咐這些石頭變成食物。耶穌卻回答說：經上記著說：人活著，不是單靠食物，乃是靠神口裡所出的一切話。魔鬼就帶他進了聖城，叫他站在殿頂（頂：原文是翅）上，對他說：你若是神的兒子，可以跳下去，因為經上記著說：主要為你吩咐他的使者用手托著你，免得你的腳碰在石頭上。耶穌對他說：經上記著說：不可試探主——你的神。魔鬼又帶他上了一座最高的山，將世上的萬國與萬國的榮華都指給他看，對他說：你若俯伏拜我，我就把這一切都賜給你。耶穌說：撒但（撒但就是抵擋的意思，乃魔鬼的別名），退去罷！因為經上記著說：當拜主你的神，單要事奉他。於是，魔鬼離了耶穌，有天使來伺候他。

在耶穌被差遣之後和祂在世福音使命開展前，祂就被聖靈帶到曠野被魔鬼試探。試探都是環繞著要討好神和討好自己慾望之間的選擇。同樣當我們嘗試過一個使命生活時，我們都要不斷在這兩個拉力中掙扎。

首先，耶穌在曠野被試探去滿足自己肉身的需要。試想想祈禱和禁食了40天，耶穌一定極度渴求食物（2節），魔鬼的詭計是要合理化地去引誘祂運用自己的能力而不依靠神的話和供應去滿足祂實在的需要。

第二次，耶穌被帶到聖城就是神的居所去試探測驗神。魔鬼帶耶穌從遠離曠野、遠離神的地方，回到神居住的聖城。當我們「以為」自己親近神，便會鬆懈，和嘗試用自己的方法滿足自我。魔鬼深知道耶穌信靠祂天父的話，它便刻意扭曲詩篇 91章11-12節除去「在一切所行的保守你」的一段。神應許如果謹守遵行祂旨意，祂必保守我們。但我們遇到危難時，不能期望神必定會超自然的介入，我們萬不可試探神，讓自我欺騙我們對神的信靠。

第三次，耶穌被試探去到山上跪拜魔鬼，從而得著展示在祂面前的所有榮華富貴。同樣，我們都

會在把榮耀歸給神和歸給自己之間掙扎。然而，神要用我們在世的生命去顯出祂的榮耀，可惜我們時常對讚賞的反應是把神應得的榮耀收歸自己而不是歸榮耀給祂。耶穌的反應卻相反，祂對魔鬼清楚說明祂只會敬拜和服侍神（第10節），同樣我們必須盡心、盡意和把所有榮耀歸給祂。我們敬拜的一舉一動都要表明我們是僕人和祂是主人的地位，祂是應得所有榮耀的那一位。再者，雖然神喜歡給祂的兒女豐盛的祝福，但我們敬拜的態度並不是要從中得取甚麼，而是我們可以給祂甚麼。

這段經文提醒我們要不住的禱告，信靠神和祂的話。我們要全心全意的敬拜祂。這些都是過一個使命人生的基本要素。

## 反思

檢查我敬拜和禱告的態度，是否高舉神？我有否信靠祂話語的應許？當我禱告時，我有否全然信靠祂？我的生命有否反映神的榮耀？

## 禱告

親愛的主耶穌，甚麼時候我遇到試探，求你叫我植根於你的說話和禱告之中，謙卑自己去跟隨你的旨意，多過自我。你是萬王之王，萬主之主！你是值得我們的讚美、崇拜和所有的榮耀！阿們。

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## 第一週 從敬拜和禱告開始 第二天

# 緊密的聯繫

### ■ 馬太福音14:15-23

天將晚的時候，門徒進前來，說：這是野地，時候已經過了，請叫眾人散開，他們好往村子裡去，自己買吃的。耶穌說：不用他們去，你們給他們吃罷！門徒說：我們這裡只有五個餅，兩條魚。耶穌說：拿過來給我。於是吩咐眾人坐在草地上，就拿著這五個餅，兩條魚，望著天祝福，擘開餅，遞給門徒，門徒又遞給眾人。他們都吃，並且吃飽了；把剩下的零碎收拾起來，裝滿了十二個籃子。吃的人，除了婦女孩子，約有五千。耶穌隨即催門徒上船，先渡到那邊去，等他叫眾人散開。散了眾人以後，他就獨自上山去禱告。到了晚上，只有他一人在那裡。

五餅二魚的改變餵飽五千男人、婦女和小孩，毫無疑問這是耶穌所行出名的神蹟之一。簡單想像一下你是坐在人群中接受餅和魚其中的一個，你才剛剛親身見證一件令人振奮的經歷；又想像你是門徒之一，你剛剛參與了人類歷史中最震撼神蹟的其中一個！你仍然十分興奮，心還在蹦跳著，你還想要經歷更多，因為感覺實在奇妙！渴望更多是挺自然的事。事實上，我們的心底和思念裡都有個黑洞，要不停地被填滿。但可惜我們只會用興奮的感覺、所擁有的物質、或者一些基於錯誤動機而得的成就來填補這些空隙。

群眾剛剛把耶穌抬舉成明星！我猶如見到他們前呼後擁的追著祂、多謝祂。這一刻當全世界的焦點都落在耶穌身上，你想祂會選擇怎樣做呢？祂一點都沒有被人的讚賞有所動容，相反，祂選擇解散群眾，讓祂可以到山上獨自禱告，這舉動對我們來說頗不尋常，但對耶穌卻不然。聖經常提及耶穌在祂的事奉高潮時，都是與神獨處，祂寶貴跟天父的安靜時刻，以便更明白天父的心意，從而和祂建立更深的關係，耶穌知道來自天父的讚賞比來自人的更寶貴。

既然耶穌在世的使命來自神，祂必須常常歸回神，得著能力和指引。我們也該記得開展這個「蒙召祝福之旅」時，要時常與神保持聯繫，神是這事工

的發起者，也是靠祂得以維持的，我們務必要在祂裡面，沒有祂我們不能達成甚麼。

## 反思

神寶貴我們與祂的關係多於我們為祂所做的事。我有否在與神建立關係和事奉服侍上取得適當的平衡呢？假若我過份投身而影響了我和神的關係，就要懂得說「不」。正如經上說「你們要休息，要知道我是神！」（詩篇46：10）

## 禱告

親愛的天父，我渴慕親近你，你是我的愛、智慧和能力的源頭，我知道我離了你就不能作甚麼。我為你給我豐盛的愛而感恩，我追求你每天都給我更新，加深我對你的渴慕，正如鹿渴慕溪水一般，阿們。

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## 第一週 從敬拜和禱告開始 第三天

# 先求祂的國

### ■ 馬太福音 6:5-13

你們禱告的時候，不可像那假冒為善的人，愛站在會堂裡和十字路口上禱告，故意叫人看見。我實在告訴你們，他們已經得了他們的賞賜。你禱告的時候，要進你的內屋，關上門，禱告你在暗中的父；你父在暗中察看，必然報答你。你們禱告，不可像外邦人，用許多重複話，他們以為話多了必蒙垂聽。你們不可效法他們；因為你們沒有祈求以先，你們所需用的，你們的父早已知道了。所以，你們禱告要這樣說：我們在天上的父：願人都尊你的名為聖。願你的國降臨；願你的旨意行在地上，如同行在天上。我們日用的飲食，今日賜給我們。免我們的債，如同我們免了人的債。不叫我們遇見試探；救我們脫離兇惡（或作：脫離惡者）。因為國度、權柄、榮耀，全是你的，直到永遠。阿們（有古卷沒有因為……阿們等字）！

### ■ 馬太福音 6:31-34

所以，不要憂慮說：吃甚麼？喝甚麼？穿甚麼？這都是外邦人所求的，你們需用的這一切東西，你們的天父是知道的。你們要先求祂的國和祂的義，這些東西都要加給你們了。所以，不要為明天憂慮，因為明天自有明天的憂慮；一天的難處一天當就夠了。

最近聽到很多各國不同的政治、經濟不穩的新聞，各人都擔心失去工作或減薪等，更不時聽到搶劫和槍殺的新聞。可以說，很多人都擔心他們的財政狀況，擔心是否有能力供養自己，但基督徒卻不一樣，我們有基督的應許勝過這些憂慮。祂雖然沒有應許我們一定會富裕，但正如這段經文所說，祂確實應許祂會照顧和保護。

耶穌在31節說「不要憂慮」總括了祂的想法，但寫出來往往比實行出來容易得多。仔細看看前文就可以明白為甚麼我們是不用憂慮的，神既然連飛鳥和花朵都照顧，我們就有肯定的理由相信神是會照顧我們的了，因此我們不需要把追求生活上的需求（吃甚麼、喝甚麼、穿甚麼）放在優先的位置。

明白這點後，我們便自由了，再不需要擔憂怎樣供養自己，可以全心全意把侍奉神和為榮耀祂生活作為生命的優先。耶穌在33節說我們要「先求」天父的國，我們要在所有的事上以榮耀祂作為首要。我們尋求「祂的義」是因為我們承認道德上已破產，這樣做我們的生命才有機會被扭轉過來；不再跟隨世界追求物質；不再需要妥協我們的誠信去換取跑贏他人，或追求我們以為需要的東西。我們有了神作生命的優先「所有東西都會加給（我們）」，心靈就滿足，無需再憂慮。這些正正反映在主禱文、耶穌的應許中（5-13節）——天父賜給我們日用的飲食，和免我們的債。

## 反思

我和神的關係如何？我最近禱告聚焦在那一方面呢？

## 禱告

主，你總是接納回轉、歸向你的人。讓我今天唯獨聚焦在榮耀你的事上。阿們。

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## 第一週 從敬拜和禱告開始 第四天

# 憑信心禱告

### ■ 馬太福音 21:18-22

早晨回城的時候，他餓了，看見路旁有一棵無花果樹，就走到跟前，在樹上找不著甚麼，不過有葉子，就對樹說：從今以後，你永不結果子。那無花果樹就立刻枯乾了。門徒看見了，便希奇說：無花果樹怎麼立刻枯乾了呢？耶穌回答說：我實在告訴你們，你們若有信心，不疑惑，不但能行無花果樹上所行的事，就是對這座山說：你挪開此地，投在海裡！也必成就。你們禱告，無論求甚麼，只要信，就必得著。

### ■ 雅各書 1:6-7

只要憑著信心求，一點不疑惑；因為那疑惑的人，就像海中的波浪，被風吹動翻騰。這樣的人不要想從主那裡得甚麼。

這正是一年之初無花果樹收割之期，又正值三月尾的聖期，無花果樹剛長成，雖然不及六月收成的好，但仍可以作食用。雖然是距離收割時候尚早，但樹既然已長出葉子，就表示該有成熟的果子。耶穌當時經過，餓了，以為可以取果子充饑。我們不其然會問，耶穌為甚麼要咒詛一棵不在結果時令的樹呢？答案是樹上茂盛的葉子顯示它應已結了果子，但可悲的是這現象帶來錯的訊息。耶穌在這裡給我們一個發人深省的教導：樹被咒詛並不是它不結果子，而是它展現了會結果子的生命，但沒有結果子。耶穌舉出這活生生的比喻是要指出那些虛有敬虔的外貌，內裡卻是空洞的人都會被咒詛。表面上是指著以色列人說，但事實上是著指所有沒有展現真正屬靈生命的人說的。就當時馬太福音的背景，針對的是猶太人的領袖，他們有敬虔的外貌，並沒有行出真正的公義來。這訊息很清楚說明：那些自稱敬虔的人最好要活出公義的果子，否則神的審判就臨到他們。

耶穌回答門徒的問題常提到祂早期的教導（參 太 17：20）就是在信的人凡是都能，就算是把山搬到海裡也可以——這可能指著他們所站立的橄欖山，或許這是一個較誇大的例子——但其意思是無論事情大小，只要有信心必能成事。

透過這個神蹟和與門徒的答問，耶穌說出信心的禱告帶來力量，祂的一生所教導的信心就是真正信靠神的能力，並識別神的旨意。他們應懂得先要洞悉神的旨意，後以信心的禱告祈求它的發生，不管事情看來怎樣沒可能。

## 反思

最近有什麼事情令我信心動搖？嘗試以信心交託給主，讓神的能力在我的生命彰顯。

## 禱告

主，加添我禱告的信心，使我照著你的旨意來榮耀你。也給我勇氣去結果子，帶領朋友歸向基督。阿們。

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## 第一週 從敬拜和禱告開始 第五天

# 警醒和禱告

### ■ 馬太福音 26:36-46

耶穌同門徒來到一個地方，名叫客西馬尼，就對他們說：你們坐在這裡，等我到那邊去禱告。於是帶著彼得和西庇太的兩個兒子同去，就憂愁起來，極其難過，便對他們說：我心裡甚是憂傷，幾乎要死；你們在這裡等候，和我一同儆醒。他就稍往前走，俯伏在地，禱告說：我父阿，倘若可行，求你叫這杯離開我。然而，不要照我的意思，只要照你的意思。來到門徒那裡，見他們睡著了，就對彼得說：怎麼樣？你們不能同我儆醒片時麼？總要儆醒禱告，免得入了迷惑。你們心靈固然願意，肉體卻軟弱了。第二次又去禱告說：我父阿，這杯若不能離開我，必要我喝，就願你的旨意成全。又來，見他們睡著了，因為他們的眼睛困倦。耶穌又離開他們去了。第三次禱告，說的話還是與先前一樣。於是來到門徒那裡，對他們說：現在你們仍然睡覺安歇罷（罷：或作麼？）！時候到了，人子被賣在罪人手裡了。起來！我們走罷。看哪，賣我的人近了。

耶穌快要被猶大出賣，並被捉拿，祂自知被釘十字架的時候將近，雖然有點猶疑，但耶穌深知祂必要死在十字架上才能成全祂的救贖重任。這任務對耶穌這全人、全神來說也絕不容易，祂的靈魂甚是憂傷，甚至到死的地步（38節）。面對這進退兩難的局面，耶穌並沒有找退路，反而選擇到客西馬尼園去禱告，一方面耶穌知道祂應該要遵從天父的旨意，但另一方面卻求天父拿走這苦杯，這杯代表祂那要死在十字架的受苦旅程。（參 太20：22-23）

我們渴望順服神，但往往跟個人意願和喜好有衝突。耶穌說「總要儆醒禱告，免得入了迷惑；你們心靈固然願意，肉體卻軟弱了。」（41節）是的，我們經常都被試探跟隨肉體、追求安舒和快樂的。無論如何聖靈都會時常提醒我們踏出我們的舒適地帶，去追求神的國和祂的使命，我們會面對苦難和試探，但耶穌教導我們要時常警醒（即保持清醒）和禱告，我們要留心肉體和靈之間的爭戰。（參 羅7：18）

這次「蒙召祝福之旅」的旅程提醒我們神呼召我們去祝福他人。有時我或者會不願意抓緊神給我們的機會和挑戰，但請記著耶穌的榜樣，祂也是在關鍵時刻靠著禱告的大能，才能履行神的旨意。讓我們學習保持警覺和禱告去完成從神而來的使命。

### 反思

從下星期開始，我們將會學習多方面的基要，用以裝備我們去好好傳遞祝福。我已準備好接受這些挑戰嗎？我選擇了我的禱告夥伴嗎？立志跟我的禱告夥伴同行並且繼續完成這個旅程吧！

### 禱告

親愛的主耶穌，多謝你給我示範了順服的好榜樣，求你把我從肉體的情慾中釋放出來，賜我能力去保持警覺、禱告和順服，使我的生命走在你的旨意中。阿們。

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## 第一週

### 從敬拜和禱告開始

### 講道回應/小組討論 — 指引

此指引的目的是幫助你去重溫和應用講道的信息並把它個人化，這是和閱讀每週主題文章和靈修材料一起做的。

#### 1. 重溫講道的信息 (15分鐘)

- a. 你認為講道的信息嘗試去探討或處理的問題是甚麼？請與小組分享。

.....

.....

講員如何透過講道的信息回答這個問題？  
主題文章如何幫助你去回答這個問題？

.....

.....

- b. 講道的信息曾直接或間接提及神的屬性？

.....

.....

- c. 如果你向一個缺席的組員用一分鐘時間來總結講道的信息，你會說甚麼？

.....

.....

.....

.....

#### 2. 把講道的信息個人化 (20分鐘)

講道的信息給了你甚麼鼓勵和安慰？

.....

.....

講道的信息給了你甚麼挑戰和責備？

.....

.....

#### 3. 應用講道的信息 (20分鐘)

主給你甚麼啟示去個人應用講道的信息？

.....

.....

你可以如何應用這次講道的信息，把它融入在你「每週挑戰」的生活中？

.....

.....

如果你努力不懈地去應用講道的信息，它對你計劃時間表、抉擇、人際關係、事奉和你每日靈修會有何影響？

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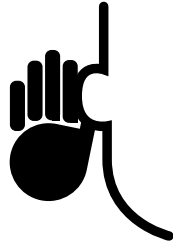
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## 第二週 主題文章



# 聆聽需要

蒙召祝福之旅進入了第二星期，我盼望神已經給你和你的小組一些讓你祝福的對象。如果還沒有的時候，請繼續的懇切禱告，亦同時從敬拜禱告中繼續與神進深關係。從第二星期至第四星期我們會學效耶穌怎樣透過聆聽，聚餐和服侍來祝福我們身邊的人和社區。在這星期的靈修當中，我們會從約翰福音中學效耶穌基督怎樣聆聽神和聆聽別人。

許多時，在與人相處上，我們是聽見(hear)而不是細心的聆聽(listen)。聽見是被動的和沒有選擇的。當別人說話的時候，我們聽，但很多時候都不放在心裡。聽見是以自己為中心，甚至在別人還未完成他們的說話前，我們便急著回應，說出我們的意見。但聖經說：「未曾聽完先回答的，便是他的愚昧和羞辱。」(箴18:13)。相反，聆聽是主動的，是刻意的，是為別人著想的。聆聽到的每句話、語調、表情，甚至每個動作都會刻在聆聽者的心裡。

## 聆聽是愛的表現

Paul Tillich 曾經說過「愛的首要職責就是聆聽」(The first duty of love is to listen)。聆聽是一種愛



的表現，聆聽者要首先將自己放下來，透過聆聽將別人的生命引進他們的心坎內。沒有專心聆聽就好像將別人拒諸於門外一樣。已故德國神學家潘霍華(Dietrich Bonhoeffer)曾經說過「差的聆聽是一種拒絕，好的聆聽是一種擁抱，差的聆聽令到別人渺小，好的聆聽令到他們覺得存在和重要。」(Poor listening rejects, good listening embraces. Poor listening diminishes the other person, while good listening invites them to exist, and to matter.)<sup>1</sup>。當人得到別人的接納和認同時，就更加願意敞開他們的生命。因為知道別人是以愛去聆聽他們。因為神的愛充滿了我們，我們就不再以批判的耳朵去聆聽，而是以愛心去聆聽。潘霍華又說「正如愛神是從聆聽祂的話語開始，愛人是從學習聆聽他們開始」(Just as love to God begins with listening to His Word, so the beginning of love for the brethren is learning to listen to them)<sup>2</sup>。

很多時候我們沒有耐性去聆聽別人，當別人說了一半的時候便很快打斷了他們的說話。原來，一些曾受傷害和極度傷痛的人，更需要長時間來建立信任，才可以敞開心懷與人分享和表達。我們可以向神祈求祂賜下耐性，但我們更應求神的愛充滿我們，使我們常活在祂的愛中，讓祂的愛充滿我們的生命。因為愛是恆久忍耐，又有恩慈的。

## 聆聽是恩典的禮物

聆聽是一份無形的禮物，每一個人都可以送贈，但隨著人的忙碌，不是每一個人都願意去付出。聆聽是將我們的時間無條件地送上，且是帶著恩典的。這恩典就是當別人在毫無期盼的時候，卻得著我們的聆聽。聆聽是生命恩典的湧流，當我們生命常常經歷神無私恩典的時候，我們就不自覺地願意付上我們的時間，沒有期待回報，只願意細心去聆聽。

## 聆聽需要謙卑的心

聆聽是需要一顆謙卑的心，聖經說：「各人不要單顧自己的事，也要顧別人的事。你們當以基督耶穌的心為心：他本有神的形像，不以自己與神同等為強奪的；反倒虛己，取了奴僕的形像，成為人的樣式；」（腓2:4-7）。聆聽不是出於自己的意念，而是學效我們的主耶穌基督。耶穌基督成了我們的榜樣，謙卑自己成為了奴僕，作出無私的奉獻。聆聽確實是以無私的服侍去關顧別人的事，以基督耶穌的心為心。

## 先聆聽神才聆聽別人

我們現在明白到聆聽原是愛，恩典和謙卑，便知道聆聽的方法固然重要，但最重要還是曉得聆聽別人的原動力是基於我們與神的關係。只有神才是愛和恩典的源頭。只有神才是我們謙卑的榜樣和能力的所在。而屬神的人必聆聽神。聖經說：「我的羊聽我的聲音，我也認識他們，他們也跟著我。」（約10:27）。當我們不願意去聆聽別人的時候，我們可能要反省我們與神的關係。

潘霍華曾說：「有很多人尋找聆聽的耳朵，但他們在基督徒群體中找不到，因為基督徒在應該聆聽的時候卻在說話。但如果他不聆聽他的弟兄，到最後他也不聆聽神；他在神面前甚麼也不作，只是胡說八道。」(Many people are looking for an ear that will listen. They do not find it among Christians, because these Christians are talking where they should be listening. But he who can no longer listen to his brother will soon be no longer listening to God either; he will be doing nothing but prattle in the presence of God too.)

<sup>1</sup> Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, Life Together.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

## 每週挑戰

- 在禱告中聆聽神的聲音，讓神指引你在家人、職場或學校尋找到需要幫助的人。
- 將你的心得與小組和家人分享。

## 反思

讓我首先在神面前作一個聆聽者，在聆聽神當中經歷到祂的愛和恩典，讓我在聆聽別人的時候得知他們的需要。

「主耶和華賜我受教者的舌頭，使我知道怎樣用言語扶助疲乏的人。主每早晨提醒，提醒我的耳朵，使我能聽，像受教者一樣。」（賽50:4）

## 第二週 聆聽需要 第一天

# 孤單的心

### ■ 約翰福音 4:1-26

主知道法利賽人聽見他收門徒施洗比約翰還多（其實不是耶穌親自施洗，乃是他的門徒施洗，他就離了猶太，又往加利利去。必須經過撒馬利亞，於是到了撒馬利亞的一座城，名叫敘加，靠近雅各給他兒子約瑟的那塊地。在那裡有雅各井。耶穌因走路困乏，就坐在井旁。那時約有午正。有一個撒馬利亞的婦人來打水，耶穌對她說：「請你給我水喝。」那時門徒進城買食物去了。撒馬利亞的婦人對他說：「你既是猶太人，怎麼向我一個撒馬利亞婦人要水喝呢？」（原來猶太人和撒馬利亞人沒有來往。）耶穌回答說：「你若知道神的恩賜和對你說『給我水喝』的是誰，你必早求他，他也必早給了你活水。」婦人說：「先生，沒有打水的器具，井又深，你從哪裡得活水呢？我們的祖宗雅各將這井留給我們，他自己和兒子並牲畜也都喝這井裡的水，難道你比他還大嗎？」…

主耶穌化解猶太與撒馬利亞人之間的敵意，祂與門徒從猶太到加利利去時（4，9節），途中並不繞道，直接走過撒馬利亞，因走路疲乏，就在敘加的雅各井旁停下來休息（5-6節）。那時，門徒進城去買食物。耶穌遇見一個在中午前來打水的撒馬利亞婦人。祂打破社會階層、宗教、種族、性別等隔核，向那婦人要水喝（7節）。在對話中，耶穌從人的肉體饑渴需要的井水談起，引導那婦人看見自己心靈的饑渴；並讓她看清自己最大的需要，就是要得著那使人生「永遠不渴」，「成為泉源」，「湧到永生」的「活水」——耶穌基督（14節）。

從肉體需要「渴完又再渴」的井水，到心靈需要那「永遠不渴」的「活水」（10節）。耶穌聆聽婦人的故事，引導她的思維，幫助她瞭解自己的需要，就是期待得著「活水湧流」的豐盛人生。從井水到「活水」，耶穌豈不是叫我們領會井水就有如屬世的追求，例如金錢、地位、名譽，罪中之樂等，這些都不能叫人滿足，唯有「活水」，就是信主的人所領受的聖靈（約7:38），在我們的內心好比活水的江河，滋潤我們，解除我們的饑渴。這

從聖靈重生的新生命，因有耶穌這生命泉源，活水長流永不枯涸。

接著，耶穌進一步幫助婦人面對自己的罪，她曾有六個丈夫（18節），自慚形穢，內心孤單。眾人不願與她結伴同行，惟有獨自出來打水。然而，主耶穌接納她，並引導她明白自己在關係上的最大需要，不是追求屬世的依靠和滿足（18節），而是重新與神建立關係，並以「心靈和誠實」來敬拜神（24節）。

從屬世的物質到屬靈的滿足；從現時的生活及家庭關係說到與神的關係，我們能否學效耶穌去聆聽孤單的人的心？我們有否體會他們因沒有救主而生命感到乾渴不滿足？我們會否幫助他們面對自己的困境，轉向耶穌，得著一個「活水湧流」的豐盛人生？

### 反思

嘗試投入撒馬利亞婦人與耶穌的對話中，我有何感受？有何發現？從主身上，我學到怎樣去聆聽和關懷一個孤單的心靈呢？

### 禱告

聖靈，求你喚醒我，讓我知道物質和屬世的享受，都不能解決人心靈深處的乾渴。唯有倚靠耶穌——這真正的活水，才能叫人心靈滿足。求你幫助我更認識並體會從基督而來，活水湧流生命中的豐盛，並主動去關心那些神安排在我身邊心靈孤單的人。透過聆聽、接納和關懷，讓我成為流通的管子，讓別人的生命能得著基督耶穌——生命的活水泉源。阿們。

## 第二週 聆聽需要 第二天

# 絕望的心

### ■ 約翰福音 5:1-9

這事以後，到了猶太人的一個節期，耶穌就上耶路撒冷去。在耶路撒冷，靠近羊門有一個池子，希伯來話叫做畢士大，旁邊有五個廊子，裡面躺著瞎眼的、癱腿的、血氣枯乾的許多病人。在那裡有一個人，病了三十八年。耶穌看見他躺著，知道他病了許久，就問他說：「你要痊癒嗎？」病人回答說：「先生，水動的時候，沒有人把我放在池子裡，我正去的時候，就有別人比我先下去。」耶穌對他說：「起來，拿你的褥子走吧！」那人立刻痊癒，就拿起褥子來走了。

在耶路撒冷，靠近羊門地方有一個畢士大池。池邊躺著許多病人，有瞎眼的、癱腿的和癱瘓的，他們都在那裏等候水動。當泉水一冒出來，大家便爭著下去，因為他們相信最先下池的病人，無論害甚麼病，都會得到醫治(4節)。

在那裏有一個癱瘓了三十八年的病人。我們可以想像他的痛苦是何等的大，整天躺臥在池邊，生活困苦，何等絕望！在他最無助的時候，並沒有親友來幫助他。他的內心是多麼痛苦、孤單，前路是多麼黑暗、淒涼。這時候，帶著醫治權柄的神子耶穌竟然出現在癱子面前。耶穌看見他躺著，知道他病了很久，就問他：「你要痊癒嗎？」(6節)癱子回答說：「先生，水動的時候沒有人幫我，把我放進池子，等我想下去時，已經有人搶先下水了」(7節;中譯本)。癱子的回應表明他根本不認識耶穌，不知道主有醫治大能；這個在病榻纏綿了三十八年的癱子只是向耶穌訴苦而已。

可是，耶穌基督是憐憫人的主。祂看見那人的苦況和絕望，便主動問他：「你要痊癒嗎？」因著主的憐憫，耶穌醫治他，叫他康復過來；就對癱子說：「起來，拿你的褥子走吧！」那人立刻痊癒，就拿起褥子來走了(8-9節)。

主耶穌是先憐憫，先愛我們，在我們還作罪人的時候，祂已為我們的罪死在十架上(羅5:8)。當我們還未認識祂，主就藉著祂的兒女們先尋找我們。祂復活得勝的大能，使「那人立刻痊癒」(9節)，讓他三十八年的癱瘓霍然而癒，

把人從絕望、黑暗的陰霾中拯救出來，因為祂是復活與生命的主(約11:1-54)。其後，主又對癱子說：「你已經痊癒了，不要再犯罪，免得你遭遇更大的禍害」(14節)。耶穌不單醫治癱子的疾病，更醫治他的心靈。祂不但沒有責備癱子過去所犯的罪過，反而關心他的將來，要他努力過健康的生活，不再犯罪。因為犯罪會帶來比癱瘓更厲害的後果和末後的審判。讓我們謹記：在絕望中，主耶穌的醫治能帶給人出路、盼望，能力與平安。

### 回應

- 主將那些「瞎眼的」(心靈眼睛未開啟的)、「癱腿的」(無力行走人生路的)，「血氣枯乾的」(失去生命盼望的)人擺在我們面前？
- 倘若他們尚未認識耶穌，怎能得著痊癒呢？我們打算怎樣以主的愛心與憐憫，以聆聽的心去靠近這些絕望的心靈？我們怎樣幫助他們投靠那能醫治、賜能力的主耶穌，讓他們不單再站「起來」，且靠主得力去「行走」人生的路？
- 請寫下他們的名字，為自己能有機會接觸他們，並為他們的需要代禱。

### 禱告

主耶穌，我為我的(親友)\_\_\_\_\_禱告。你知道他現在正處於……絕望的困境中，求你讓他明白他不要單憑自己的能力去解決人生難題。聖靈啊，幫助他將心中的難處告訴耶穌，接受主的醫治。求你加添他依靠你的信心，相信神的能力在人的軟弱上顯得完全，並堅強壯膽地倚靠主，重新得力站起來，走人生的路。阿們。

## 第二週 聆聽需要 第三天

# 信靠的心

### ■ 約翰福音 10:1-18

「我實實在在地告訴你們：人進羊圈，不從門進去，倒從別處爬進去，那人就是賊，就是強盜。從門進去的，才是羊的牧人。看門的就給他開門，羊也聽他的聲音。他按著名叫自己的羊，把羊領出來。既放出自己的羊來，就站在前頭走，羊也跟著他，因為認得他的聲音。羊不跟著生人，因為不認得他的聲音，必要逃跑。」耶穌將這比喻告訴他們，但他們不明白所說的是什麼意思。所以，耶穌又對他們說：「我實實在在地告訴你們：我就是羊的門。凡在我以先來的都是賊，是強盜，羊卻不聽他們。我就是門，凡從我進來的，必然得救，並且出入得草吃。盜賊來，無非要偷竊、殺害、毀壞；我來了，是要叫羊得生命，並且得的更豐盛。『我是好牧人，好牧人為羊捨命。若是雇工，不是牧人，羊也不是他自己的，他看見狼來，就撇下羊逃走，狼抓住羊，趕散了羊群。雇工逃走，因他是雇工，並不顧念羊。我是好牧人，我認識我的羊，我的羊也認識我，正如父認識我，我也認識父一樣；並且我為羊捨命。我另外有羊，不是這圈裡的，我必須領牠們來，牠們也要聽我的聲音，並且要合成一群，歸一個牧人了。我父愛我，因我將命捨去，好再取回來。沒有人奪我的命去，是我自己捨的。我有權柄捨了，也有權柄取回來，這是我從我父所受的命令。』」

主耶穌用好牧人與羊的比喻來闡明祂和信徒之間的關係，這建基於祂與父神親密的關係上(17-18節)，其中祂提到兩個「我是」。耶穌說：「我是羊的門」(7，9節)。就如羊進入羊圈得到安全的保障；同樣，當人信主，凡從耶穌基督——這救恩的門進去的就「必然得救」(9節)，進入神的國，得著永遠的平安。又好像羊必先進羊圈，確定和牧人的關係，然後才能由牧人帶領，出到草場，得著一切所需要的供應。我們要先尋找耶穌，接受救恩，便能脫離罪的牢籠，得到真自由，並在牧人的保護和帶領下，得著身心靈的各樣供應，猶如羊「出入得草吃」(9節)，人的生命得到飽足。

耶穌又說：「我是好牧人」(11，14節)。主是我們的牧者，祂怎樣牧養我們？主耶穌清楚指出，我們在祂心中的地位是極為寶貴。到底祂愛我們到怎樣的地步？

好牧人「為羊捨命」：為了羊的緣故，好牧人不惜犧牲自己的性命(11，15節)，目的是要讓人得生命，而且是豐豐富富的生命(10節)。主耶穌來，不是要從我們得著甚麼，乃是要把祂的生命賞賜人，並帶領我們進入祂的豐盛中(西2:9-10)。

好牧人認識祂的羊：祂按名字叫自己的羊，而羊也認識、聽從主人的聲音(3，4，14節)。原來，牧人給每隻羊起了不同的名字，每天按名叫喚羊進出羊圈。同時，羊也認得自己主人的聲音，只會對他的聲音作出回應。

這種牧人和羊的互相「認識」(14節)，確是一種深入的內在瞭解，源自彼此間的生命相通和契合。主耶穌與信徒間，有著這種生命的連結、交通、認識和親密關係，這豈不是父與子之間那種深切的認識—「我父是在我裏面，我也在父裏面」(38節)的縮影嗎？倘若我們常在主裏面，主也常在我們裏面(約15:5)，我們豈不更深切的認識神，更被神所認識(加4:9)？難怪羊能認出主人的聲音！同樣，蒙恩的信徒，豈不應有一種內在生命的素質和渴求—就是渴望得著聖靈的光照和啟示，能分辨甚麼是出於神，能明白和聽見主的呼喚和慈聲。但重要的是，這種進深認識是要在恆久的安靜、獨處、讀經，禱告等屬靈操練中才能掌握到的。

好牧人在前頭引導群羊：大牧人耶穌明白我們的性情、需要，感受和渴求，祂也深知我們的罪和軟弱，但祂仍深愛我們，時刻呼喚和引導我們走在屬神的道路上。我們要回應祂的呼喚，深信祂明白我們，深愛我們，更會拯救我們。雖然我們不知前路如何，但相信主的應許，祂必會帶領。只要我們將一生交託在神的手中，仰望那信心創始成終的耶穌，祂會在前頭引導，我們儘管放心跟隨。在主的引導中，去尋找並得著一個主恩滿溢的豐盛人生。

### 反思

羊怎樣經歷好牧人的供應？他們需要聆聽、認識和分辨主人的聲音，並且跟從。作為主的群羊，我有以認真的態度，透過讀經、禱告、安靜，獨處等屬靈操練，學習聆聽、明白、相信、依靠，順服和跟隨主耶穌的帶領和引導嗎？

### 禱告

主耶穌，感謝你是我的好牧人，甚至為我捨命。求你幫助我更認識你、愛你、緊緊跟隨你。阿們。

## 第二週 聆聽需要 第四天

# 哀傷的心

### ■ 約翰福音 11:32-45

馬利亞到了耶穌那裡，看見他，就俯伏在他腳前，說：「主啊，你若早在這裡，我兄弟必不死。」耶穌看見她哭，並看見與她同來的猶太人也哭，就心裡悲嘆，又甚憂愁，便說：「你們把他安放在哪裡？」他們回答說：「請主來看。」耶穌哭了。猶太人就說：「你看，他愛這人是何等懇切！」其中有人說：「他既然開了瞎子的眼睛，豈不能叫這人不死嗎？」耶穌又心裡悲嘆，來到墳墓前。那墳墓是個洞，有一塊石頭擋著。耶穌說：「你們把石頭挪開！」那死人的姐姐馬大對他說：「主啊，他現在必是臭了，因為他死了已經四天了。」耶穌說：「我不是對你說過，你若信，就必看見神的榮耀嗎？」他們就把石頭挪開。耶穌舉目望天，說：「父啊，我感謝你，因為你已經聽我。我也知道你常聽我，但我說這話是為周圍站著的眾人，叫他們信是你差了我來。」說了這話，就大聲呼叫說：「拉撒路出來！」那死人就出來了，手脚裹著布，臉上包著手巾。耶穌對他們說：「解開，叫他走！」那些來看馬利亞的猶太人見了耶穌所做的事，就多有信他的。

有個病人名叫拉撒路，住在伯大尼，他是馬利亞和馬大的兄弟。當拉撒路病危，馬利亞和馬大就打發人去找耶穌求醫治(約11:1-4)。可是，當耶穌到了伯大尼，拉撒路已經被埋葬在墳墓裡四天了(39節)。這兩姊妹帶著哀傷的心，遇見「遲來」的耶穌，她們不約而同的埋怨主說：「主啊，你若早在這裡，我兄弟必不死」(21, 32節)。

從馬大的反應看來，她似乎相信耶穌若然在場，就能醫治她的兄弟，叫拉撒路不致於死。但可惜太遲了，人既已死，主才到來，就無能為力了。試想想，在危機中，我們有像馬大一樣求過主，但卻受制於人的觀念，只相信我們認為可能的事？

再看馬利亞，她俯伏在耶穌腳前痛哭，好像一切希望都已消逝。她不明白神的計劃，也很難接受主的安排，因為她看不到主的醫治和行動，就落在灰心、失望，困惑與難過中。我們有否曾像馬利亞？在困境中，當我們得不到所想所求的事，

就埋怨主，且任憑自己灰心喪志，容讓各種負面情緒湧現，繼而信心動搖，甚至對主失去盼望？

由傷痛的心靈所發出的哀聲，主耶穌總在聆聽。在祂的時間和定意下，耶穌說：「你們把石頭挪開」(39節)。當那相信只要耶穌祈求，父神就會聽祂禱告的馬大(27節)站在墳墓前，面對著一個死了四天的屍體，她確實不相信會有神蹟出現。

在面對困境，人不知如何面對。當主作工的時間表看來跟我們的想法不同，甚至相反時，我們對主的信心，豈不總受到人的觀念所限制？我們只相信主能作我們認為可能的事，而不會相信祂會作我們認為不可能的事。或者，我們會質問神：為何你坐視不理？為何你故意叫我們吃苦？為何你任由我們四處碰壁？許多時候，我們豈不也像馬大和馬利亞，似乎對神有信心，但卻信心不足？

我們有否察覺？直到耶穌揚言：「我不是對你說過，你若信，就必看見神的榮耀嗎？」他們才把石頭挪開。耶穌舉目望天禱告父神後，就大聲呼叫說：「拉撒路出來！」那死人就出來了(40-44節)。我們豈不明白擋在墳墓門口的「石頭」就是攔阻人信靠，順服神的各樣人意嗎？事實上，我們若要經歷主復活的大能，便必須除去一切人的觀念和意見去「把石頭挪開」。它們若不被挪開，就不能看見復活主的大能。當人以信心接受神要作的工，就必看見神的榮耀。在神沒有難成的事(耶32:17)，只要人踏出信心的一步，就能看見，因為我們還未說出來，神已經聽了(詩65:2-4)。

### 反思

我有否像馬大的經歷？平安無事時，我會毫無疑問地相信神的大能；但面對無法解決的困難時，我的信心便不知跑到那裡去了？我的信心是頭腦的認知，還是在現實生活中得勝困難的信心？面對哀傷的心靈，我怎樣聆聽別人的需要，並鼓勵他們信靠神？

### 禱告

主耶穌，你是復活的主。你說過：「人若信，就必看見神的榮耀」。無論今天我處於甚麼境況中，求你幫助我信靠你，賜我信心，得著主耶穌復活的大能，成為我每日生活的力量。幫助我擺脫懷疑和軟弱的枷鎖，緊靠主去得勝困難考驗，榮耀主名。阿們。

## 第二週 聆聽需要 第五天

# 順服的心

### ■ 約翰福音 5:19-24

耶穌對他們說：「我實實在在地告訴你們：子憑著自己不能做什麼，唯有看見父所做的，子才能做；父所做的一切事，子也照樣做。父愛子，將自己所做的一切事指給他看，還要將比這更大的事指給他看，叫你們稀奇。父怎樣叫死人起來，使他們活著，子也照樣隨自己的意思使人活著。父不審判什麼人，乃將審判的事全交於子，叫人都尊敬子如同尊敬父一樣。不尊敬子的，就是不尊敬差子來的父。我實實在在地告訴你們：那聽我話又信差我來者的，就有永生，不至於定罪，是已經出死入生了。」

多少時候我們的工作或行事，都是出於自己的喜好、意願或熱心，而不是在聆聽中隨從聖靈的引導和帶領呢？多少時候我們雖然願意把自己關在房間內禱告神，但我們的心卻早已不知飛到那裏去了？要在安靜中聆聽父神的聲音，明白並活出神的心意，我們必需由親近神，在主面前專注禱告和聆聽開始。

使徒約翰所描繪的父子圖像(Father-Son Imagery)，強調親密關係和權柄，聚焦在耶穌與父神間緊密的關係上。神子耶穌甘願成就父神旨意，作成與父一致的事，皆因子與父原為一，「父所做的一切事，子也照樣做」(約5:19)。主耶穌就在謙卑和受限制的原則下，顯出祂無限的權能：看見父作，子才作；父說，子才說。原來，子與父的旨意是一致的，看見父怎樣作，子才怎樣作。並且父會將一切事指給子看，讓祂成就。

究竟子怎樣才能完全曉得父所行的事？關鍵在於「愛」。聖經說：「父愛子，將自己所作的一切事指給他看」(約5:20)。「愛」的原文是把對方當作自己的意思。「父愛子」是一種持續不斷的行動。基於父對子的愛，父把權柄賜給子，子與父有同樣的權柄(21, 22, 27節)去達成使命。父更向子指示「更大的事」，即使是叫死人復活(21節)只有神才能做到的事，父也照樣讓子「隨著自己的意思賜生命給人」(約5:21; 中譯本; 約11:26)。

這意味著父與子的本質相同，天父能作的，耶穌也能作，因為祂是神的兒子，祂就是神。主耶穌擁有神的本質，生命與權柄，要使靈性上死亡的人活過來得永生。因為祂來了是要叫人得生命，並且得的更豐盛(約10:10)。

要得著這「出死入生」的生命，關鍵在哪裡？關鍵在於「聽」和「信」。「聽」字原文有「聽從」的意思(約8:47；太11:15)。因為主實在要提醒聽的人留意祂的話：『那「聽」見我的話又「信」那差我來的，就有永生，不被定罪，而是已經出死入生了』(約5:24; 新譯本)。其實，這永恒的生命，不必等到將來，現在就可以擁有。不但如此，人有著永生，便不至被定罪，不會受審判，因為基督已經在十字架上為我們付上罪的贖價，所以人的罪不會再被記念(來10:17)，而且他已經出死入生了。

### 回應

耶穌基督既已為世人提供了一條「不被定罪」、「出死入生」通往永生的道路，問題是我們是否願意接受主的邀請，「聽從」並「相信」那與父神同為生命之源——賜人永生(26節)的耶穌基督。

### 禱告

聖靈，教導我學效主耶穌專注聆聽父神的聲音。幫助我不單「聽從」主的呼喚，更堅心信靠跟從主。求你教我曉得聆聽主的慈聲，隨著聖靈的引導將人領向耶穌。阿們。

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## 第二週

### 聆聽需要

### 講道回應 / 小組討論 — 指引

此指引的目的是幫助你去重溫和應用講道的信息並把它個人化，這是和閱讀每週主題文章和靈修材料一起做的。

#### 1. 重溫講道的信息 (15分鐘)

- a. 你認為講道的信息嘗試去探討或處理的問題是甚麼？請與小組分享。

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.....

講員如何透過講道的信息回答這個問題？  
主題文章如何幫助你去回答這個問題？

.....

.....

- b. 講道的信息曾直接或間接提及神的屬性？

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- c. 如果你向一個缺席的組員用一分鐘時間來總結講道的信息，你會說甚麼？

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#### 2. 把講道的信息個人化 (20分鐘)

講道的信息給了你甚麼鼓勵和安慰？

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講道的信息給了你甚麼挑戰和責備？

.....

.....

#### 3. 應用講道的信息 (20分鐘)

主給你甚麼啟示去個人應用講道的信息？

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你可以如何應用這次講道的信息，把它融入在你「每週挑戰」的生活中？

.....

.....

如果你努力不懈地去應用講道的信息，它對你計劃時間表、抉擇、人際關係、事奉和你每日靈修會有何影響？

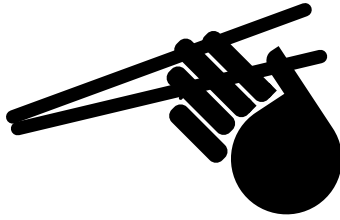
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### 第三週 主題文章

## 使命聚餐



蒙召祝福之旅進入了第二星期，我盼望神已經給你和你的小組一些讓你祝福的對象。如果還沒有時候，請繼續的懇切禱告，亦同時從敬拜禱告中繼續與神進深關係。從第二星期至第四星期我們會學效耶穌怎樣透過聆聽，聚餐和服侍來

祝福我們身邊的人和社區。在這星期的靈修當中，我們會從約翰福音中學效耶穌基督怎樣聆聽神和聆聽別人。

在馬太福音當中，出現了三次「人子來」。在馬太福音18:11節說：「人子來，為要拯救失喪的人。」（參 路19:10）。在馬太福音20:28節說：「正如人子來，不是要受人的服事，乃是要服事人，並且要捨命，作多人的贖價。」（參 可10:45）。這兩段的經文給我們肯定，耶穌基督來到這個世界的使命就是透過祂的服事和最後十字架上的捨命去尋找並拯救一些失喪(失落)的人。在馬太福音11:19節出現了另外一次「人子來」：「人子來了，也吃也喝，人又說



他是貪食好酒的人，是稅吏和罪人的朋友。但智慧之子總以智慧為是。」耶穌說人子來了，也吃也喝。原來耶穌基督來到這個世界，其中一個使命是來吃和喝。耶穌在世上的事工大部份都是圍繞在餐桌和吃喝中間。祂的第一個神蹟也是在婚宴中行的(參 約2:1-11)。祂接觸不同人大多都是在用膳時，例如：祂和門徒的最後晚餐，耶穌復活後在以馬忤斯上遇上兩個門徒，最後和他們共膳擘餅和耶穌在提比哩亞海邊向門徒顯現，為他們預備早飯，堅固彼得等等。猶太人誤會耶穌是個貪食好酒的人，因祂是稅吏和罪人的朋友。稅吏和罪人正是當時猶太人視而不見，沒有交道的人。耶穌的使命就是透過吃喝成為他們的朋友。可想而知，與別人共膳是一個實踐福音使命的地方。

## 飯桌是關係建立的地方

現代人可能已經忘記共膳是一個關係建立的地方。在這個高科技的社會中，雖然一同用膳，但各人卻在看自己手機的螢光幕。可能我們在家中吃飯的時候，也很自然地會打開電視，各人的眼目和專注都不是放在他身邊的人。尤其現在快餐文化中，一頓午餐可能要用最快的時間完成，好讓完成繁忙的時間表，可惜身邊的人卻彷彿感到被忽略了。

我們要重拾飯桌成為一個關係建立的地方。在共膳中，彼此能夠分享日常生活瑣碎的事和重要生命的故事，一同回憶以往的事；一同夢想將來的事；一同歡笑，一同哭泣。無論信仰歷程是在甚麼光景當中，我們都可一同尋找，一同經歷神的信實和恩典。我們可能會覺得在未信的人面前講述福音很困難，但是我們要認定福音不只是神學理論，而是神在我們生命中的故事。所以，在一同進膳，互相交流生命故事的時候，神很自然地就會在我們的故事中流露出來。

## 飯桌是打破界限的地方

跟我們共膳的人通常是我們的家人、教會的弟兄姊妹、朋友、同事，同學等等。每一類別的人可能在不同的地方和空間一同進膳。最有可能與同事和同學共膳的地方是在公司和學校，與弟兄姊妹可能是在團契小組或崇拜後聚餐，有些時候會在餐館，有些時候在家裡。我們與家人共膳的時間可能較多，而大部份都在家中。在特別節日的時候，我們都喜愛和最親的家人共膳。這可能是我們日常的定律。原來在甚麼時候和甚麼人一同用膳間接地是反映到我們的關係。試想像，如果

你邀請某同事一同在家中吃早餐，就表示你和這同事可能較深交。弟兄姊妹在餐館裡跟在家中的共膳的親密感覺都可能不同。如果我們在大節日中，邀請一些不相熟的朋友來我們家中吃飯，他們的感覺又會如何呢？

原來一頓飯可以無形地定了一些界限，將人分別出不同的親密和接納程度。耶穌卻是打破這界限去和那些不被接受的人共膳。因為祂接納和愛那些被社會邊緣化及需要福音的人，祂願意打破界限進入人群當中，與他們進深關係。飯桌絕對是打破界限的地方，或許我們跟一些關係不親密的人一同用膳會感到恐懼，但這卻是打開隔膜，一種接納和包容的表現。

## 飯桌是服侍的地方

邀請別人到我們的家裡作客，給他們弄一頓晚餐是一種款待。這不單只是食物的款待，而是令到客人有賓至如歸的感覺。食物的質素不是最重要，反而是我們對他們的服侍更為重要。在家中服侍的時候，他們可能透過我們家裡的擺設、照片，圖畫等等加深對我們的認識。飯桌的服侍是生命交流的服侍。服侍的人不但付出他們的時間，心意和空間，還付出他們生命和生活的一部份。這種服侍是將眾人距離拉近的。這不是福音的重點嗎？福音就是將神與人拉近，從而令到人與人的關係拉近。讓飯桌成為一個服侍的地方，一個實踐福音的地方。

## 每週挑戰

在你的小組或個人，邀請一位不相熟的朋友共膳。(考慮開放你的家，但地點並無硬性規定)

## 反思

飯桌是我們第一個福音據點，是一個生命交流的地方，一個接納和包容的地方，也是一個服侍的地方。我們一天有至少三次用膳的機會，我們會怎樣好好使用神給予我們的機會呢？

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### 第三週 使命聚餐 第一天

## 以恩慈去包容

### ■ 路加福音 5:27-32

這事以後，耶穌出去，看見一個稅吏，名叫利未，坐在稅關上，就對他說：「你跟從我來！」他就撇下所有的，起來跟從了耶穌。利未在自己家裡為耶穌大擺筵席，有許多稅吏和別人與他們一同坐席。法利賽人和文士就向耶穌的門徒發怨言說：「你們為什麼和稅吏並罪人一同吃喝呢？」耶穌對他們說：「無病的人用不著醫生，有病的人才用得著。我來本不是召義人悔改，乃是召罪人悔改。」

聚餐的場合在路加福音舉足輕重，耶穌宣講福音時經常和群眾一起用膳，與他同餐共桌的人都是被社會歧視的群眾和和罪人(7:29, 31-34; 14:1-24; 15:1-2; 19:1-10)。在27節，記載了耶穌「看到」一個稅吏名叫利未。稅吏坐在稅關上收取過路費、關稅和其他稅項，這個制度給稅吏帶來貪污的機會，他們會將收到的稅款中飽私囊。稅吏這個群體經常在四福音裏出現，他們沒有任何資歷和學問，屬猶太的社會中最底的階層，猶太人恨惡他們，因為稅吏剝削自己的同胞。反之，法利賽人就受到猶太人尊敬，他們為神過敬虔生活，他們身體力行地遵行律法書的規條，務要在任何事情上保持聖潔，法利賽人是不願和罪人來往的。

27節記載耶穌主動「留意」利未，而利未沒有注意耶穌，耶穌單純以恩典來呼召利未委身——叫他去跟從耶穌。利未隨即回應呼召，就立刻「起來」撇下一切去跟從耶穌(28節)。「起來」這個動詞顯示一個人的決心，利未以「撇下所有的」去表明他的委身心志，他勇敢地離開他的稅關，放棄他舊有的生活方式；利未更在自己的家裏為耶穌擺設筵席去回應呼召(29節)；利未邀請很多稅吏和「別人」去出席這個盛宴，因為他要向大家分享福音的信息。但法利賽人標籤「別人」為罪人(30節)，顯而易見，這些「別人」的生活方式不符合法利賽人的標準，他們和稅吏都是受法利賽人所排擠。

有別於法利賽人，耶穌選擇和利未和稅吏們共餐，祂恩慈地接納利未的邀請，出席在他家中舉行的

宴會，他投入利未的社交圈子。耶穌選擇了包容去取代排擠，以喜樂的心代替抱怨，接受代替抗拒(30節)。

### 反思

神對所有人有恩典，有憐憫！我是否在有意無意間，排斥一個在你周邊的人？也許他是個極需要神的愛和救恩的人。

### 禱告

親愛的主耶穌，求你憐憫我，除去我眼前的障礙和防礙我接受你愛的攔阻，求你擴闊我的眼界，讓我知道你的心意，幫助我找到身傍那些迷失的人！阿們。

### 第三週 使命聚餐 第二天

## 赴敵人的筵席

### ■路加福音7:36-50

有一個法利賽人請耶穌和他吃飯，耶穌就到法利賽人家裡去坐席。那城裡有一個女人，是個罪人，知道耶穌在法利賽人家裡坐席，就拿著盛香膏的玉瓶，站在耶穌背後，挨著他的腳哭，眼淚濕了耶穌的腳，就用自己的頭髮擦乾，又用嘴連連親他的腳，把香膏抹上。請耶穌的法利賽人看見這事，心裡說：「這人若是先知，必知道摸他的是誰，是個怎樣的女人，乃是個罪人！」耶穌對他說：「西門，我有句話要對你說。」西門說：「夫子，請說。」耶穌說：「一個債主有兩個人欠他的債，一個欠五十兩銀子，一個欠五兩銀子。因為他們無力償還，債主就開恩免了他們兩個人的債。這兩個人哪一個更愛他呢？」西門回答說：「我想是那多得恩免的人。」耶穌說：「你斷的不錯。」於是轉過來向著那女人，便對西門說：「你看見這女人嗎？我進了你的家，你沒有給我水洗腳，但這女人用眼淚濕了我的腳，用頭髮擦乾；你沒有與我親嘴，但這女人從我進來的時候就不住地用嘴親我的腳；你沒有用油抹我的頭，但這女人用香膏抹我的腳。所以我告訴你：她許多的罪都赦免了，因為她的愛多；但那赦免少的，他的愛就少。」於是對那女人說：「你的罪赦免了！」同席的人心裡說：「這是什麼人，竟赦免人的罪呢？」耶穌對那女人說：「你的信救了你，平平安安地回去吧！」

讀這段聖經，我們通常會專注於故事的主角那位妓女的身上。今日的靈修，請我們將焦點轉移到法利賽人西門和耶穌的對話。通常我們會忽略了事件發生的地點：耶穌接納了西門的邀請到這個法利賽人的家出席這場「鴻門宴」，西門和他的同夥就是早前30節經文描述：「為了自己廢棄了神的律法的法利賽人和律法師，因為他們沒有受過約翰的洗」的人。早前兩章經文描繪了這夥人對耶穌有敵意：法利賽人議論耶穌(路5:21;6:2)，發怨言(路5:30)和傾全力去窺探耶穌(路6:7)。

我們知道耶穌喜歡和罪人同席，同時也喜歡和法利賽人交流。當然，耶穌清楚知道在席間的交談，必然會涉及一些具爭議性的話題，但是耶穌沒有逃避，而是把握機會和西門對話。

妓女並不是宴會的座上客，但她到場迎接耶穌(37節)。這位妓女被描繪為一個罪人，她預備了昂貴的香膏放在珍貴的瓶子內去膏抹耶穌的腳，耶穌認定是個難能可貴的奉獻(38節)。但是西門只關心耶穌為甚麼讓一個有罪的婦人去接觸他(39節)。耶穌就把握機會去教導西門，如何去回應神的愛這個重要課題(40-47節)，耶穌透過債主恩免欠債人，債項多寡的比喻說明：當人感到自己越多的虧欠和不足，就越能感受到神的豐盛。西門認為自己已經是做得很好，很足夠，所以他停止去服侍耶穌(44節)，停止表達敬意(45節)和停止付出(46節)去回應愛他的耶穌。

這段對話可能成為改變法利賽人西門生命的重要時刻，但也要視乎他如何理解這次對話。不要忘記，雖然西門和法利賽人以耶穌為敵，但耶穌仍然恩慈地給西門一個機會，接受他的邀請到他家作客。

### 反思

假設我是耶穌，我會如何把握這個聚餐的機會和法利賽人和婦人分享耶穌的使命？誠實地從我的心底找出這些人，可能這些人很少與我打交道，特別是經常和我作對的。當我想到這些人時，有甚麼在我腦海中出現？

### 禱告

主耶穌，鑒察我，驅走我內心的怯懦，讓我可以和批評我，對我不滿和經常挑剔我的人對話。我知道他們需要耶穌的愛。神啊！求你賜給我勇氣和恩慈的心，接受你付託的神聖任務和他們一同用膳。主啊！賜給我由你而來的智慧和平安的心。阿們！

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### 第三週 使命聚餐 第三天

## 疲倦時的邀請

### ■ 路加福音 9:12-17

日頭快要平西，十二個門徒來對他說：「請叫眾人散開，他們好往四面鄉村裡去借宿找吃的，因為我們這裡是野地。」耶穌說：「你們給他們吃吧！」門徒說：「我們不過有五個餅、兩條魚，若不去為這許多人買食物就不夠。」那時人數約有五千。耶穌對門徒說：「叫他們一排一排地坐下，每排大約五十個人。」門徒就如此行，叫眾人都坐下。耶穌拿著這五個餅、兩條魚，望著天祝福，掰開，遞給門徒，擺在眾人面前。他們就吃，並且都吃飽了。把剩下的零碎收拾起來，裝滿了十二籃子。

餵飽五千人，是四福音書都有記載的神蹟，耶穌在行神蹟前，花了很長的時間去聆聽十二使徒的報告，他們傳福音所做的一切(參 可6:30)。之後，耶穌打算和使徒退到一個寧靜的地方休息(參 可6:31)，但是群眾發現了耶穌就從各城徒步跟隨他們。當耶穌看到人群就起了憐憫的心，因為他們好像沒有牧人的羊(參 可6:34)，祂開始醫治當中的病人和教導群眾(參 太14:14)。

試想你是耶穌，當你工作了漫長的一天，到了黃昏，你已疲累不堪正需要休息，你會像門徒一樣要送走人群，好讓大家可以歇息和有一個寧靜的時間嗎？門徒的反應是合符情理，因為他們沒有足夠的食物去供應這大群人，門徒疲倦，紅日西沉，身處郊野，遠離城鎮，對門徒而言，最好的解決方法是解散人群，讓他們不致餓死。另外，門徒也可以歇一歇，為明天的工作做好準備，這是合乎邏輯達到雙贏方案，你同意嗎？

儘管如此，耶穌做了出人意表的事！在這疲倦時間，耶穌不獨關心群眾靈命的需要，同時也關注他們肉身的需要(路9:13)。耶穌決定餵飽五千人，帶給我們一個驚喜！這是耶穌施行過的最大神蹟，門徒和群眾親身經歷了耶穌轉變事物的大能和他豐盛的恩典。如果耶穌聽從門徒的建議解散群眾，事件會變得平平無奇。反之，耶穌在他疲倦的時間作出明智的決定，讓神的名得以被高舉。

### 反思

假設我是耶穌的門徒，經歷這個神蹟我有甚麼領受？我會有很多合情理的借口逃避去款待有需要的人嗎？又或許我會用總有第二次機會去做為自己開脫？從耶穌對群眾憐憫的心和關注他們的需要上，我有甚麼領受呢？當有迫切需要的人出現在我面前，即或會打擾我的計劃，我會如何回應？

### 禱告

親愛的主耶穌，讓我有充足的信心和憐憫的心去服侍有需要的人群體。賜給我由你而來的愛心和力量，踏出我的安樂窩去服侍他們，讓我在事奉時可以經歷到你改變事物的大能和豐盛的慈愛！聖靈啊！求你指導我，讓我可以知道你的旨意，殷勤好客地服侍有需要的人。阿們！

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### 第三週 使命聚餐 第四天

## 不吝嗇的款待

### ■路加福音 14:7-15

耶穌見所請的客揀擇首位，就用比喻對他們說：「你被人請去赴婚姻的筵席，不要坐在首位上，恐怕有比你尊貴的客被他請來，那請你們的人前來對你說：『讓座給這一位吧！』你就羞羞慚慚地退到末位上去了。你被請的時候，就去坐在末位上，好叫那請你的人來對你說：『朋友，請上坐！』那時，你在同席的人面前就有光彩了。因為凡自高的，必降為卑；自卑的，必升為高。」耶穌又對請他的人說：「你擺設午飯或晚飯，不要請你的朋友、弟兄、親屬和富足的鄰舍，恐怕他們也請你，你就得了報答。你擺設筵席，倒要請那貧窮的、殘廢的、癱腿的、瞎眼的，你就有福了！因為他們沒有什麼可報答你。到義人復活的時候，你要得著報答。」同席的有一人聽見這話，就對耶穌說：「在神國裡吃飯的有福了！」

耶穌在這個比喻教導我們謙卑和款客之道。當年，跟別人用膳是一個重要的社交禮儀，從在路加福我們知道設宴的地點(5:29)，客人的身份(5:30)和宴會的禮儀(7:44; 11:38)。參加宴會有重要的社會意義，進餐的習慣揭示了社會不同階層的鴻溝，耶穌和法利賽人對餐宴觀念就有天壤之別。耶穌招待的對象都是社會的邊沿階層，預表了天國慶典的盛宴。反之，法利賽人就以社會地位決定請客名單，將大部分群體拒諸門外。

早期教會不太關注耶穌再來和餐宴關係的屬靈意義，他們倒關注出席餐宴客人的身份和他們所屬的社群，並引發激辯(徒10,15;加2:11-14)。從事件中我們可以學到兩個功課：第一，餐宴不能用來表達客人的社會地位，卻是表明慶賀的喜樂(7-11節)，主人要視每個客人為上賓。第二，我們不可以祈望從客人身上得到回報(12-13節)。耶穌教導主人不要請你的朋友、兄弟，親戚和富有的隣居，反而，我們要邀請貧窮、殘障、癱腿，和瞎眼的作客，耶穌的客人屬於利未記指的「不可接近」的群體(利21:17-23)。我們服侍是要神得榮耀，因此我們祈望的祝福是來自神並不是來自人。

### 反思

這個比喻提醒我們要重新思考和反省自己的基督徒的價值觀，內中有甚麼讓我們在有意或無意間造成一道屏障，攔阻我們去邀請其他人加入基督的群體，或是讓他們無法接受神的恩典？

神不看重我們的社會地位，祂要我們每日與人交往時，活出一個異常慷慨和包容的心態。我們的小組是封閉，或是開放歡迎新人加入？我們又如何作好準備去歡迎新人加入呢？神又預備了那些新人在我周圍呢？

### 禱告

親愛的主耶穌，求你轉變我的思想和心志，讓我可以漸漸蛻變成近似你的樣式，因為你是柔和謙卑和慷慨。教導我，給我一顆開放和真誠感恩的心去服侍人群。阿們。

### 第三週 使命聚餐 第五天

## 無條件的接納

### ■路加福音 19:1-10

耶穌進了耶利哥，正經過的時候，有一個人名叫撒該，做稅吏長，是個財主，他要看看耶穌是怎樣的人。只因人多，他的身量又矮，所以不得看見。就跑到前頭，爬上桑樹，要看耶穌，因為耶穌必從那裡經過。耶穌到了那裡，抬頭一看，對他說：「撒該，快下來！今天我必住在你家裡。」他就急忙下來，歡歡喜喜地接待耶穌。眾人看見，都私下議論說：「他竟到罪人家裡去住宿！」撒該站著對主說：「主啊，我把所有的一半給窮人，我若詭詐了誰，就還他四倍。」耶穌說：「今天救恩到了這家，因為他也是亞伯拉罕的子孫。人子來，為要尋找、拯救失喪的人。」

撒該不單是個稅吏，他還是個稅吏長和很富有的人(2節)，他在猶太人中不受歡迎因為他敲詐很多人(8節)，又是個罪人(7節)，因此，在群眾中，沒有人願意讓出位置讓他可以看到耶穌。撒該為要看到耶穌，終於要爬上桑樹上去看耶穌是甚麼人(4節)。當我們將這事件結連和路加福音18:18-25耶穌宣佈天國福音時說：「有錢財的人進神的國，可真難啊！」的教訓。比較下，這個富有的官就沒有將自己生命最珍愛的東西交給耶穌，他選擇緊抱自己的財富，結果就憂愁地離開耶穌。不過，當我們仔細地去檢視這兩件事情時，撒該和這年青富有的官都有一些相似的地方：他們都「跑」向耶穌，內心非常急迫和誠懇地去追尋他(路19:4比較可10:17)，撒該爬上樹去「見」耶穌顯示了他的謙卑，因為富有的人不會這樣做，同樣，少年的官亦謙卑地跪在耶穌跟前(參可10:17)。但後果有別，撒該就歡歡喜喜去接待耶穌，那少年的官卻離棄了耶穌，憂愁地繼續自己的生活。為甚麼有分別呢？少年的官來到耶穌面前問了一個錯誤的問題：「我該做甚麼才得到永生？」(路18:18)，但撒該只是懷著單純的心走到耶穌面前。

耶穌見到撒該立即對他說：「撒該，快下來！今天我要住在你的家裏。」(5節)耶穌在人群中揀選了罪人撒該，一個受到輕視和不受歡迎

的人，耶穌不但和他打招呼，還要到他的家住宿，表明耶穌決心尋求和撒該建立緊密的關係，這樣，就給撒該一個意外驚喜，當所有人都排斥撒該，此刻，他完全感受到耶穌無條件的接納。耶穌要住在撒該的家，是要當眾確立他的尊嚴，打開撒該的眼睛和開放他的心去懺悔。由於得到神的認可，撒該的生命出現了重大的轉變，他甚至願意四倍償還曾經給他敲詐過的人，而根據舊約的條文，他悔罪後不用作這樣重大的賠償(利6:5;民5:7)。反而，在前一章記載的年輕的官就憂愁地離開，因為他一心追求錢財。由於耶穌無條件的接納，促使撒該有出人意外的回應。

### 反思

我會如何對待那些不接受我或經常對我發怨言的人(7節)？我預備好去接待受歧視或是不受歡迎的人嗎？我有準備，例如和他們進餐表達神的愛嗎？今天如果我要仿效耶穌去和他人進餐，我會如何表達對他們的接納？我又打算邀請那位呢？如果我是撒該，會如何回應來自神的愛和包容？

### 禱告

親愛的主耶穌，感謝你賜給我無條件的愛和包容，教導我可以仿效你，幫助我可以開步以通過邀請他人與我進餐的方法，引領他們進入我的生活圈子。聖靈啊！我確信你會驅走我心中的恐懼和焦慮，在整個過程中指引我，讓我的生命可以成為神恩典的流通管子。阿們。

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## 第三週

### 使命聚餐

### 講道回應/小組討論 — 指引

此指引的目的是幫助你去重溫和應用講道的信息並把它個人化，這是和閱讀每週主題文章和靈修材料一起做的。

#### 1. 重溫講道的信息 (15分鐘)

- a. 你認為講道的信息嘗試去探討或處理的問題是甚麼？請與小組分享。

.....

.....

講員如何透過講道的信息回答這個問題？  
主題文章如何幫助你去回答這個問題？

.....

.....

- b. 講道的信息曾直接或間接提及神的屬性？

.....

.....

- c. 如果你向一個缺席的組員用一分鐘時間來總結講道的信息，你會說甚麼？

.....

.....

.....

.....

#### 2. 把講道的信息個人化 (20分鐘)

講道的信息給了你甚麼鼓勵和安慰？

.....

.....

講道的信息給了你甚麼挑戰和責備？

.....

.....

#### 3. 應用講道的信息 (20分鐘)

主給你甚麼啟示去個人應用講道的信息？

.....

.....

你可以如何應用這次講道的信息，把它融入在你「每週挑戰」的生活中？

.....

.....

如果你努力不懈地去應用講道的信息，它對你計劃時間表、抉擇、人際關係、事奉和你每日靈修會有何影響？

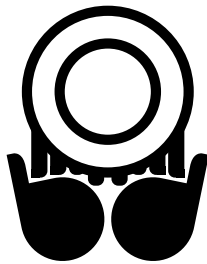
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## 第四週 主題文章

# 關懷服侍



在過往兩週我們學習以聆聽需要和共膳來祝福別人。但是我們不要忘記繼續為我們去祝福的對象禱告，同時求神賜下我們祝福，好讓我們成為別人的祝福。這星期讓我們一同學習以關懷服侍來祝福別人。

## 1. 服侍的重點

### 近處的服侍(Proximity)

我們服侍的對象應該從近處而起。我們要明白我們在某一個地區居住、上學、上班，甚至在公共交通遇到的人，都是神在背後按著祂的旨意安排的。這絕對不是偶然，他們便是我們要服侍的對象。

### 敏銳的服侍(Perceptively)

我們在服侍之前應先聆聽和一同共膳，因為我們不要只是服侍他們表面的需要，而是深層的服侍。我們要學習存敏銳的心去聆聽並了解他們的故事，好讓我們的服侍能夠體貼他們真正的需要。

### 心靈的服侍(Personally)

服侍是地域近處的事奉亦是心靈近距離的事奉。我們要去嘗試感覺他們所感覺的。但是我們亦要小心為自己設立界限，不要讓他們的需求掌管我們。同時，要先讓神的話語和祂的愛充滿我們，好使別人的情緒不會佔領我們心靈的空間。

### 能力的服侍(Powerfully)

要緊記我們服侍的能力不是從我們來的，而是從萬軍之耶和華而來。聖經說：「神能照著運行在我們心裡的大力充充足足的成就一切，超過我們所求所想的。」(弗3:20)。所以在服侍之先，我們首先要求神賜下充份的能力，因為我們要倚靠神才能成事。我們也要以禱告來服侍，因為

只有禱告尋求神的大能，才能完成神要我們成就的事。

## 2. 服侍的態度

### 犧牲的服侍(Serve Sacrificially)

耶穌說：「因為人子來，並不是要受人的服事，乃是要服事人，並且要捨命作多人的贖價。」(可10:45)。耶穌的服侍是犧牲的，祂捨去了自己的性命來拯救我們。當然耶穌沒有要求我們犧牲性命來服侍人，但祂卻要求我們存有犧牲的心志來服侍人。我們的時間，金錢和才幹都是主耶穌所賜，就應當任由主耶穌使用。

### 真誠的服侍(Serve Sincerely)

雖然我們很渴望我們祝福的對象能夠認識主耶穌，但無論他們對福音的反應是如何，我們都要以真誠來服侍他們。主耶穌知道門徒猶大要出賣祂，彼得將會三次在人面前不認祂，其他門徒在祂十架受苦時將會離開祂，就算他們如此來回應耶穌基督的愛，祂也在最後晚餐時為他們洗腳(參約13:5)。耶穌真誠的服侍是我們應學效的對象。

### 恆久的服侍(Serve Sustainably)

服侍是建立關係的渠道，所以我們不可以視服侍為一個短暫的行動。有些服侍可能是一次性，但大部份的服侍，特別是對我們身邊的人都是長線的。恆久的事奉會給別人看到我們的真誠和愛。而且，我們的服侍也不應該發怨言。聖經說：「殷勤不可懶惰。要心裡火熱，常常服事主。在指望中要喜樂，在患難中要忍耐，禱告要恆切。」(羅12:11-12)

### 每週挑戰

為你在第二週找到你要幫助的人，定出計劃去實行。

為你在第三週找到你要邀請共膳的人，定出計劃去實行。

### 反思

在過往服侍別人的過程中，有那些重點和態度是我忽略了的？

## 第四週 關懷服侍 第一天

# 履行使命

### ■ 馬可福音 8:34-38 《新譯本》

於是把眾人和門徒都叫過來，對他們說：「如果有人願意跟從我，就應當捨己，背起他的十字架來跟從我。凡是想救自己生命的，必喪掉生命；但為我和福音犧牲生命的，必救了生命。人就是賺得全世界，卻賠上自己的生命，有甚麼好處呢？人還能用甚麼換回自己的生命呢？在淫亂罪惡的世代，凡把我和我的道當作可恥的，人子在他父的榮耀裡，和聖天使一起降臨的時候，也必把他當作可恥的。」

主耶穌預言自己要受害，十字架的陰影近了(31節)。祂深深的明白在猶太人心中的彌賽亞既不受苦也不受死的觀念，就向門徒三次解釋彌賽亞的代價與意義(8:34-38; 9:31; 10:33)。這是耶穌首次的解釋。之後，祂把眾人和門徒都叫過來，對他們說：「如果有人願意跟從我，就應當捨己，背起他的十字架來跟從我」(34節，新譯本)。

耶穌要門徒，也要今日的信徒明白：跟隨基督和背十字架是不可分割的兩件事。「捨」的原文是「否認、拒絕、放下」之意。「捨己」不是自我否定，而是將自己交給神，意謂不再以自己為生命和生活行事的中心。本來十字架是一種刑罰的工具：「背起十字架」就是指在神面前看自己是死的，將生命交在神的旨意中。如果我們要跟隨耶穌，就必須「背起自己的十字架」來跟從祂。換句話說，就是要放棄我們自私自利的價值標準，遵行主的吩咐，捨己為人。事奉就是一種放下自我，背起十架，跟從主的表現。

為甚麼要這樣做？耶穌清楚指出：「凡是想救自己生命的，必喪掉生命；但為(祂)和福音犧牲生命的，必救了生命」(35節，新譯本)。「喪掉生命」就是前節所說的「捨己」和「背十字架」。這些人願意為主和福音的緣故，捨棄自己的願望、喜好、利益，甘心為主受苦，甚至忍受不便或困難，效法主犧牲的榜樣，在福音的事上擺上自己，透過服侍人來事奉主。結果是怎麼樣？主說他們「反

而得着生命」(當代)。你我是否願意學效耶穌的服侍，接受福音使命，同時也願意甘心擺上自己？

接著，主給我們挑戰：「一個人就是賺得了全世界，却賠上了自己的生命，有甚麼益處呢？當然沒有！」(36節，中譯本)試想想，若果我們賺得全世界，只不過是讓自己得著今生短暫的屬世享受，結果卻賠上了屬天永恆的生命，叫自己的靈魂受到永遠的虧損。兩者比較起來，何者有益？何況，我們若選擇愛世界，因而「喪掉生命」，甚至「出賣了自己的靈魂」(The Message)，又有甚麼好處呢？人還能用甚麼換回自己的生命呢？(37節，新譯本)這樣看來，不以福音為恥，在這彎曲悖謬的世代，以事奉主為樂，以見證主為榮，才是明智的選擇！

### 反思

究竟我的生命是為自己而活，以賺得全世界為追求的目標；還是被主使用，以主和主的福音為榮，為追求的目標？何者來得有價值？人在己，何者來得有意義？我肯為主和福音的緣故付出代價嗎？

### 禱告

聖靈啊，幫助我善用生命，投資永恆；把握機會使用自己的時間和精力，積極與人分享福音，在家庭、職場、學校、教會或社區內，以事奉主為樂，以見證主為榮。阿們。

## 第四週 關懷服侍 第二天

# 捨己服侍

### ■馬可福音10:35-45《新譯本》

西庇太的兒子雅各、約翰，來到耶穌跟前，對他說：「老師，我們無論向你求甚麼，願你為我們作成。」耶穌說：「要我為你們作甚麼？」他們說：「在你的榮耀裡，讓我們一個坐在你的右邊，一個坐在你的左邊。」耶穌說：「你們不知道你們求的是甚麼。我喝的杯，你們能喝嗎？我受的洗，你們能受嗎？」他們說：「能。」耶穌說：「我喝的杯，你們固然要喝；我受的洗，你們也要受。只是坐在我的左右，不是我可以賜的，而是 神預備賜給誰，就賜給誰。」其他十個門徒聽見了，就向雅各、約翰生氣。耶穌把他們叫過來，對他們說：「你們知道各國都有被尊為元首的統治他們，也有官長管轄他們。但你們中間卻不要這樣；誰想在你們中間為大的，就要作你們的僕役，誰想在你們中間為首的，就要作大家的奴僕。因為人子來，不是要受人服事，而是要服事人，並且要捨命，作許多人的贖價。」

有一天，西庇太的兩個兒子雅各和約翰來見耶穌，求耶穌答允他們一個特別的請求：就是當主坐在榮耀寶座上的時候，讓他們分別坐在耶穌的左右兩邊(35-36節)。這兩兄弟求主的左右座位，意思是在耶穌建立彌賽亞的國度裏，得著僅次於主的地位。耶穌說：「你們不知道你們求的是甚麼，我喝的杯，你們能喝嗎？我受的洗，你們能受嗎？」(38節；新譯本)他們毫不考慮就回答說：「我們能！」

耶穌說：「我要喝的杯，你們固然要喝；我要受的洗，你們固然要受；但是誰可以坐在我的左右，卻不是我能決定的，這些坐位，上帝為誰預備，就賜給誰」(39-40節；中譯本)。其餘十個門徒聽見這事，就對兩人非常不滿。因此，耶穌叫他們過來，教訓他們說：「你們知道各國都有被尊為元首的統治他們，也有官長管轄他們，但你們中間卻不要這樣；誰想在你們中間為大的，就要作你們的僕役；誰想在你們中間為首的，就要作大家的奴僕。因為人子來，不是要受人的服事，而是要服事人，並且要捨命，作許多人的贖價」(42-45節；新譯本)。

當雅各和約翰請求坐在主的左右，要耶穌將顯要的地位賜給他們時；這種私慾的祈求，被主稱為「你們不知道所求的是甚麼？」由此可知，他們仍在追求屬世的名譽、地位，完全沒有理解到作主門徒應付上的代價。我們不要只顧怪責雅各和約翰虛榮心重，你我的虛榮心絕不在他們之下。虛榮心並不限於貪圖世上的名利和富貴，基督徒的虛榮心可能以另一種方式出現，例如爭奪或追求教會事奉的名聲和地位，就如十二個門徒沒有一個例外，彼此爭論誰為大(參 可9:34)，互不相讓，竟至嫉妒、惱怒、生氣和不滿一樣。

世人喜歡處於高位，操權管治、支配人，但主卻吩咐跟隨祂的人不要這樣做。主耶穌並非要我們不尊重世上的權柄，而是要屬神兒女對屬靈的權柄有不同的看法。主指出跟從祂的人在服侍的態度上，要持甘心作僕人的心態(43節)。在神的事工上，信徒服侍的原則與世界的方法完全不同。在教會中為大，並不是要掌權管束人(42節)，乃是要甘心服侍人(44節)；就如主自己到世上來服侍，捨己犧牲的態度一樣(45節)。原來，在天國裏的大和小，不是按照地位，而是根據「服侍」的態度如何；在天國裏的首與末，不是根據身份，而是基於你我謙卑的品德——是否願意作眾人的僕人？原來，在神國度中服侍人的為大，肯犧牲的才受到尊重，跟屬世的標準迥然不同。

## 回應

我有多渴望學效主耶穌服侍的榜樣，不在意地位身份，甚至不惜犧牲自己的精神、體力、時間和金錢；甘願為主和福音的緣故，專心致力於服侍人。

## 禱告

聖靈啊，幫助我效法主捨己的服侍；不求權、不求位、不求名聲，作個肯服侍、肯犧牲、不發怨言，謙卑事主事人的信徒。阿們。

## 第四週 關懷服侍 第三天

# 全然擺上

### ■馬可福音14:3-9《新譯本》

耶穌在伯大尼，在患癱風的西門家裡吃飯的時候，有一個女人來了，拿著一瓶珍貴的純哪噠香膏。她打破了瓶，把香膏澆在耶穌的頭上。有幾個人很生氣，彼此說：「為甚麼這樣浪費香膏呢？這香膏可以賣三百多個銀幣，用來賙濟窮人。」他們就向她發怒。但耶穌說：「由她吧！為甚麼難為她呢？她在我身上作的是一件美事。你們常常有窮人跟你們在一起，只要你們願意，隨時都可以向他們行善，然而你們卻不常有我。她已經盡她所能的作了。她預先用香膏膏了我的身體，是為了我的安葬。我實在告訴你們，福音無論傳到世界上甚麼地方，都要傳講這女人所作的來記念她。」

耶穌在伯大尼、患癱瘋的西門家裡吃飯的時候，有一個女人，拿著一瓶珍貴的真哪噠香膏進來，打破了瓶，把香膏澆在耶穌的頭上(3節)。有些在座的人看見，就很不高興，議論紛紛地說：「為甚麼這樣浪費？賣掉這瓶香膏，起碼有三十多兩銀子可以用來賙濟窮人」(4-5節；當代)。因此，他們對那女人很生氣。

耶穌說：「由她吧，何必難為她呢？她為我做了一件美好的事。你們常常有窮人在一起，願意的話，你們隨時可以救濟他們，可是我不能常跟你們在一起。她已盡她所能的做了；她把這香膏倒在我身上是為我的埋葬先做準備。我告訴你們，普天之下，福音無論傳到甚麼地方，人人都要述說她所做的事，來記念她」(6-9節；中譯本)。

當馬利亞用珍貴的真哪噠香膏膏耶穌時，她是否預先想到會有人批評她這樣做是太浪費呢？似乎，她並不在乎別人的反應，為了愛主的緣故，即使受到別人的誤會也在所不辭。

在馬利亞身上，我們看見事奉主的三種態度：(一)她將最「珍貴」的獻給主。這價值三十兩銀的香膏(5節)，約等於當時一個普通工人一年的工資。這樣看來，馬利亞豈不是看主比香膏更寶貴？可見，金錢在一顆愛主的人的心中，算不得甚麼。我是否像馬利亞那樣覺得主寶貴？(二)她把玉瓶打破，香膏不但不能再保存，馬利亞也絲毫沒有為

自己留下半點。我是否也像她不為自己留下分文，把所有歸主用？我願意為愛主而犧牲？願意在主的事上擺上金錢、時間和精力，甚至為此忍受別人的批評、誤解和指責？(三)她把香膏澆在耶穌頭上，表明她在愛主的行動上不吝嗇，全為主擺上一切。我能否將自己最好的獻予主，認為祂是配得的？對比在座的門徒(參太26:8)，在愛主和事奉主的事上，論斷、干涉人。我有否對別人愛主、服侍主的行動，作出批評和指責？

### 反思

我是否願意在物質和心靈方面，學習不惜代價為主犧牲？在愛主的行動上，我會否學習不吝嗇，因為沒有一樣東西是太寶貴而不能奉獻給主的？我對主的愛，對真理的渴慕和追求，對事奉的付出和擺上，對屬靈成長上的委身，許多時會遭受別人的批評和誤解，特別是未信主的人對我們信仰生活並不認同，但無論別人怎樣說，主耶穌仍是我們摯愛的終極追求。我如何在事奉主的事上，向前邁進一步？

### 禱告

聖靈啊，教導我願意為主獻上犧牲、不吝嗇的愛，甘心為主獻我所有，阿們。

## 第四週 關懷服侍 第四天

# 柔和謙卑

### ■ 馬可福音 9:33-37

他們來到迦百農，耶穌在屋裡問門徒說：「你們在路上議論的是什麼？」門徒不作聲，因為他們在路上彼此爭論誰為大。耶穌坐下，叫十二個門徒來，說：「若有人願意做首先的，他必做眾人末後的，做眾人的用人。」於是領過一個小孩子來，叫他站在門徒中間，又抱起他來，對他們說：「凡為我名接待一個像這小孩子的，就是接待我；凡接待我的，不是接待我，乃是接待那差我來的。」

耶穌和門徒回到迦百農的居所，耶穌問門徒說：「你們在路上爭論些甚麼？」門徒們一聲不響，因為他們在路上彼此爭論誰為大(33-34節)。門徒緘默不言，無疑是因為他們心知剛才在路上辯論着「誰最大」的議題，不能讓主知道，或許他們也覺尷尬，只好不作聲，沉默以對。

接著，耶穌坐下，叫十二個門徒到他面前，向他們解釋「為大」的屬靈原則。主對他們說：「誰要居首位，誰就得跟在大眾後面，作大眾的僕人」(35節；中譯本)。於是，他找來一個小孩，站在門徒中間；抱起他說：「有人為我的緣故接待這樣小的一個門徒，就等於接待我；凡接待我的，不單是接待我，也等於接待了那差我來的父」(37節；當代)。

事實上，喜歡為大、為首是人的傾向。顯然，門徒心內的大與小與主耶穌所認為的大與小不同。門徒的觀念正像我們的觀念一樣，以為職位、權力大的就是大。主耶穌卻明明指出在神家裏論說大小的新標準，並不是在於權位如何；乃是在於我們是否比眾人更謙卑？是否喜歡服侍人？是否不輕看任何一個小人物？是否為主名的緣故而去服侍？

不單門徒，我們作信徒的也要知道，在教會中，惟有願意謙卑自己服侍人的，才是真正的領袖。耶穌把小孩領過來，站在門徒中間，又抱起他，是要表明凡自己謙卑像這小孩子一樣的，他在天國裏就是最大的。謙卑不僅是基督徒事奉的根本態度，也是進天國的基本法則(參 可10:15)。原

來，主所要求的與我們現時的價值觀完全相反。因為在神國度的屬靈原則是：「凡自高的，必降為卑；自卑的，必升為高」(路18:14)；就好像主耶穌自甘卑微，順服至死，而且死在十字架上。所以，神就將祂升為至高(參 腓2:8-9)。我們能否學效主謙卑作僕人的態度去服侍人？

主更指出，凡為著榮耀主名或因著主的緣故，去關心、接納、服侍和幫助軟弱及有需要的人，這種接待，就如同接待主(參 可9:36-37;太10:42;25:40)。我們要緊記：謙卑作僕人，不是天生的美德，而是要操練得來的。讓我們學效主謙卑的服侍，因為祂來世上不是要受人的服侍，乃是要服侍人(參 可10:45)。

### 反思

我存著怎樣的心態去服侍？在家庭、工作或教會事奉中，我傾向講求權位、吩咐別人去作事，還是我也樂意去幫助、分擔別人的事？本週，當我接觸社會上基層服務的人士，如收款員、酒樓食肆的侍應等，用愛心對他們禮貌一點或讚賞一下，這會給別人和自己一些甚麼的感受？

### 禱告

主啊，幫助我不自大、不自高；學效主謙卑的服侍，願意作眾人的僕人。阿們。

## 第四週 關懷服侍 第五天

# 完全順服

### ■ 馬可福音 15:25-39

釘他在十字架上已是巳初的時候。在上面有他的罪狀，寫的是：「猶太人的王。」他們又把兩個強盜和他同釘十字架，一個在右邊，一個在左邊。從那裡經過的人辱罵他，搖著頭說：「咳！你這拆毀聖殿、三日又建造起來的，可以救自己，從十字架上下來吧！」祭司長和文士也是這樣戲弄他，彼此說：「他救了別人，不能救自己。以色列的王基督，現在可以從十字架上下來，叫我們看見就信了！」那和他同釘的人也是譏誚他。從午正到申初，遍地都黑暗了。申初的時候，耶穌大聲喊著說：「以羅伊！以羅伊！拉馬撒巴各大尼？」（翻出來就是：「我的神！我的神！為什麼離棄我？」）旁邊站著的人，有的聽見就說：「看哪，他叫以利亞呢！」有一個人跑去，把海絨蘸滿了醋，綁在葦子上，送給他喝，說：「且等著，看以利亞來不來把他取下。」耶穌大聲喊叫，氣就斷了。殿裡的幔子從上到下裂為兩半。對面站著的百夫長看見耶穌這樣喊叫斷氣，就說：「這人真是神的兒子！」

耶穌基督為世人的罪在十架上受死，是神救贖計劃的核心；也是主完全順服父神旨意的具體表現。被門徒出賣（參 可14：45－46）、兵丁戲弄、鞭打、戴上荊棘的冠冕（參 可15：15－20），主耶穌最終被釘在各各他山嶺的十架上。

從巳初（上午九點；25節），到申初（下午三點；33節），被掛在十字架上六個小時的耶穌基督，在前三小時已經受盡人的逼害和譏誚的苦。過路的人譏笑祂，搖著頭說：「哼！你這個要拆毀聖所，三日之內又把它建造起來的，從十字架上把自己救下來吧！」祭司長和經學家也同樣譏笑祂，彼此說：「他救了別人，却不能救自己」（可15:29－31；新譯本）。其實，眾人譏誚的重點是：主若真是神的兒子，便應有能力救自己，至少神也不會坐視祂愛子被釘至死。可是，人豈知道主耶穌不從十字架上下來，正要表明祂是神的兒子（羅1：4），為要藉著十架上的死，完成神救贖的計劃。

在逼迫和周圍的冷嘲熱諷中，耶穌依然沒有發出半句呻吟。但在後來三小時受神的離棄和審判中，祂卻大聲呼喊：「我的神！我的神！為甚麼離棄我？」（參 34節）為何？在主被釘的後期時間，從午正到申初，遍地都黑暗了（參 33節）。黑暗正是罪的表徵，也象徵著神轉臉不顧。此刻在十架上的耶穌，站在罪人的地位上「親身擔當了我們的罪」（參 彼前2:24;3:18），並且替我們成為罪（參 林後5:21）；叫世人的罪和一切黑暗的事，都與主一同在十架上接受神的審判與懲罰。主耶穌因著擔代世人的罪而成了被詛咒的罪身，以致公義的神不能不棄絕祂（參 詩22：1），使祂承受被神離棄的痛苦。

到了申初，耶穌大叫一聲，氣就斷了（可15：37；新譯本）。主耶穌的死使隔開聖所和至聖所的幔子「從上到下裂為兩半」（參 38節）。幔子預表著主的身體，祂的身體為罪受刑受死，在十字架上為我們裂開，是為我們開了一條又新又活的路，使我們藉著祂能夠坦然無懼進入至聖所。藉著主的死，我們可以毫無阻隔地來到神的施恩寶座前，得憐恤、蒙恩惠，作隨時的幫助（參 來10：19－20；4：16）。

### 反思

神的僕人耶穌對父神甘心順服，甚至願意捨命完成十架救贖計劃。祂雖本有神的形像，但卻虛己，取了奴僕的樣式，自甘卑微，順服至死，而且死在十字架上；「所以」，神將祂升為至高（腓2:6-9）。同樣，神要我明白「凡自卑的，必升為高」，但「凡自高的，必降為卑」。在事奉中，我如何學效謙卑的神僕耶穌-願意以犧牲捨己的態度去服侍主、服侍人？

### 禱告

聖靈啊，幫助我學效主耶穌對父神的順服；教導我在事奉上，能甘心獻上自己，並以基督耶穌的捨己作為服侍的最高榜樣。阿們。

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## 第四週

### 關懷服侍

### 講道回應/小組討論 — 指引

此指引的目的是幫助你去重溫和應用講道的信息並把它個人化，這是和閱讀每週主題文章和靈修材料一起做的。

#### 1. 重溫講道的信息 (15分鐘)

- a. 你認為講道的信息嘗試去探討或處理的問題是甚麼？請與小組分享。

.....

.....

講員如何透過講道的信息回答這個問題？  
主題文章如何幫助你去回答這個問題？

.....

.....

- b. 講道的信息曾直接或間接提及神的屬性？

.....

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- c. 如果你向一個缺席的組員用一分鐘時間來總結講道的信息，你會說甚麼？

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#### 2. 把講道的信息個人化 (20分鐘)

講道的信息給了你甚麼鼓勵和安慰？

.....

.....

講道的信息給了你甚麼挑戰和責備？

.....

.....

#### 3. 應用講道的信息 (20分鐘)

主給你甚麼啟示去個人應用講道的信息？

.....

.....

你可以如何應用這次講道的信息，把它融入在你「每週挑戰」的生活中？

.....

.....

如果你努力不懈地去應用講道的信息，它對你計劃時間表、抉擇、人際關係、事奉和你每日靈修會有何影響？

.....

.....



## 分享故事

在過往四週，我們學習透過敬拜禱告親近神和尋求神給予我們祝福的對象。並且學習透過聆聽別人的需要，透過共膳與人建立關係和關懷服侍來祝福別人。蒙召祝福之旅的最後一個要素就是分享故事。透過聆聽，共膳和服侍，我們能夠祝福別人，但是最要緊的是將神介紹給他們認識，讓神成為他們生命中的一部份。將神介紹給別人要懂得分享三類故事：

- 1) 救贖計劃的故事
- 2) 蒙福得救的故事
- 3) 門徒生命的故事

### 神救贖計劃的故事

聖經說：「只要心裡尊主基督為聖。有人問你們心中盼望的緣由，就要常作準備，以溫柔、敬畏的心回答各人」（彼前3:15）。我們每一位跟隨主耶穌的門徒都應該學怎樣裝備自己去傳福音，述說神救贖計劃的故事，包括：神的創造、人的墮落、神差祂的獨生兒子耶穌基督降生、神的國度降臨在人間、耶穌基督在十字架犧牲的救贖、祂死後按著預言第三天復活，祂再來的日子及新天新地的降臨。

### 蒙福得救的故事

神祝福我們，將永恆的生命透過主耶穌基督賜予我們。我們每一位跟隨主的門徒都有蒙福得救的故事。蒙福得救的故事內容主要包括以下三方面：

1. 信主前的光景
2. 信主的原因與經過
3. 信主後的改變

我們相信福音有著改變生命的能力，因為我們所信的耶穌基督是復活得勝的主。所以信主前後，生命會因著聖靈的工作而改變。我們應該細心思神在我們身上的工作，因未信者是很有興趣知道我們生命是怎樣藉著神的大能而改變的。

註：如果你是自孩童時在教會長大歸主，請思想你是在那一刻真正擁有自己的信仰而不是只跟隨父母的信仰呢？是在甚麼情況下有這經歷呢？

### 門徒生命的故事

除了蒙福得救的故事之外，肯定我們還會有很多生命的故事。因為深信愛我們的主每一天都會在我們生命工作。神的旨意是要我們作合祂心意的門徒，所以，當我們去留意神在我們生命的工作之前，我們必需知道門徒的特質。耶穌曾經直接教導怎樣活才是真正的門徒。以下是五樣門徒的特質：

#### a. 愛耶穌多於一切 (Loves Jesus Above All)

「人到我這裡來，若不愛我勝過愛（愛我勝過愛：原文作恨）自己的父母、妻子、兒女、弟兄、姐妹，和自己的性命，就不能作我的門徒。」（路14:26）

#### b. 渴慕和遵從神的話語

(Loves and Obeys the Word of God)

耶穌對信他的猶太人說：「你們若常常遵守我的道，就真是我的門徒；」（約8:31）

#### c. 耶穌是我生命的主 (Jesus is the Lord)

耶穌又對眾人說：「若有人要跟從我，就當捨己，天天背起他的十字架來跟從我。」（路9:23）

#### d. 彼此相愛 (Loves One Another)

「你們若有彼此相愛的心，眾人因此就認出你們是我的門徒了。」（約13:35）

#### e. 結果子祝福別人 (Blessed to Bless)

我是葡萄樹，你們是枝子。常在我裡面的，我也常在他裡面，這人就多結果子；因為離了我，你們就不能做甚麼。...你們多結果子，我父就因此得榮耀，你們也就是我的門徒了。...不是你們揀選了我，是我揀選了你們，並且分派你們去結果子，叫你們的果子常存，使你們奉我的名，無論向父求甚麼，他就賜給你們。（約15:5,8,16）

結果子是神給予我們的祝福和恩典，所以我們只要跟祂連接，果子便會生長出來。（參詩



1:2-3)。不但我們的生命會結果子(參 加 5:22-23)，還會祝福別人結出福音的果子來。

以下的圖表是我們要留意神在我們生命的工作。

## 門徒生命故事的類別

原來每一個生命環節都是神塑造我們成為門徒的時刻。我們意會到一些生命的故事是神用來提醒及幫助我們提升門徒生命的特質。當我們關注於愛耶穌多於一切、遵從神的話語和耶穌是我生命的主(第二縱行)這些特質時，我們便會留意關於這些生命環節的故事，如順服跟從、敬拜事奉、信靠得勝和渴慕主道。當我們關注於被神祝福結果子(第三縱行)這些特質時，我們便會留意一些相關的生命環節，如蒙恩得救、神的供應、神的保守、神的加力、神的恩典、禱告蒙允。當我們關注於彼此相愛和祝福別人(第四縱行)這些特質時，我們便會留意一些相關的生命環節，如廣傳福音、關懷禱告、幫助別人、彼此饒恕、與人和好。

所以，我們不要只留意某一方面的故事而要全方位的關注。我們很多時候只著重被神祝福的時候，卻遺忘了其他的類別如愛耶穌多於一切、遵從神的話語和耶穌是我生命的主。請留意無論每一個門徒生命的故事是大是小都能彰顯神的工作，讓別人感受到神的大能、慈愛和信實。

如果我們不太掌握到怎樣講述神的故事，就請盡快去參加訓練，參與祝福別人的工作。

## 每週挑戰

用禱告去堅立你的承諾，為一位未信主的朋友分享你的生命見證。

謹記：用這個時機，分享主耶穌在你生命中的工作。

## 反思

每一分秒神都在我們的生命工作，求神賜下啟示的靈，讓我們知曉祂奇妙的作為，好讓我們能夠以生命影響生命。

## 第五週 分享神的故事和我們的故事

### 概要

這個星期，透過靈修和「生命探索」習作，你會發現神在你生命中獨特的工作，因為你個人生命的故事是神宏大故事其中的一部份，你是誰和神在你生命中的作為，對神的羣體和我們如何去祝福別人是極之重要的。

在接下來的五日，請首先默想經文，然後用時間禱告尋求聖靈的引導去更多認識自己，再按著「生命探索」習作的五個步驟去寫出你的故事，目標不是要匆匆完成習作，而是去作深入的洞察，嘗試放慢你的生活節奏留空間給神。切記，神是生命的作者，唯有祂能洞悉你的一生。

切要以靈命操練來完成每一個步驟，這樣能幫助你更貼近神和對祂有更深入的认识。我們鼓勵你每天做「生命探索」習作直至全部完成，儘管你要用二至三個星期的時間，不要放棄，因為當你完成習作後，你將會見到你的生命旅程變得更為充實。



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## 第五週 分享神的故事和我們的故事 第一天

# 神鑒察我的生命

### ■ 詩篇 139:1-12

耶和華啊，你已經鑒察我，認識我。

我坐下，我起來，你都曉得，你從遠處知道我的意念。

我行路，我躺臥，你都細察，你也深知我一切所行的。

耶和華啊，我舌頭上的話，你沒有一句不知道的。

你在我前後環繞我，按手在我身上。

這樣的知識奇妙，是我不能測的；至高，是我不能及的。

我往哪裡去躲避你的靈？我往哪裡逃躲避你的面？

我若升到天上，你在那裡；我若在陰間下榻，你也在那裡。

我若展開清晨的翅膀，飛到海極居住，

就是在那裡，你的手必引導我，你的右手也必扶持我。

我若說「黑暗必定遮蔽我，我周圍的亮光必成為黑夜」，

黑暗也不能遮蔽我使你不見，黑夜卻如白晝發亮，黑暗和光明在你看都是一樣。

神已鑒察我們！祂對我們有深入的認識，包括我們的思想。用些時間默想這段經文，求神鑒察我們生命中的每一個時刻，無論我們往那裡去，讓神引領和握著我們的手。

### 生命探索習作

完成第一個步驟 — 40 頁

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## 第五週 分享神的故事和我們的故事 第二天

# 神譜寫我的生命

### ■ 詩篇 139:13-14

我的肺腑是你所造的，我在母腹中，你已覆庇我。我要稱謝你，因我受造奇妙可畏；你的作為奇妙，這是我心深知道的。

### ■ 雅各書 1:16-18

我親愛的弟兄們，不要看錯了。各樣美善的恩賜和各樣全備的賞賜都是從上頭來的，從眾光之父那裡降下來的，在他並沒有改變，也沒有轉動的影兒。他按自己的旨意，用真道生了我們，叫我們在他所造的萬物中好像初熟的果子。

神是信實的，神是良善的，神也是永不改變的！或許我們以為神是當我們信主的時候纔開始譜寫我們的生命，其實當我們還未知道祂存在的時候，祂已經開始工作。在我們生命中所接觸的人、事、和物，都是經過神刻意的安排，為要帶領我們去親近祂。其實，生命探索習作的精髓就是幫助我們去經驗和確認在我們的人生中，每一件發生的事情都是離不開神的這一個真理。當我們還在母胎的時候，神已譜寫我們生命故事的第一章（參 詩篇 139:13-14），之後，神從未停止對我們的看顧和為我們安排，把最好的賜給我們（參 雅各書 1:16-18）。

### 生命探索習作

開始第二個步驟 — 41 頁

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## 第五週 分享神的故事和我們的故事 第三天

# 神給我的大計劃

### ■ 希伯來書11

信就是所望之事的實底，是未見之事的確據。古人在這信上得了美好的證據。我們因著信，就知道諸世界是藉神話造成的；這樣，所看見的並不是從顯然之物造出來的。亞伯因著信獻祭於神，比該隱所獻的更美，因此便得了稱義的見證，就是神指他禮物作的見證。他雖然死了，卻因這信仍舊說話。以諾因著信被接去，不至於見死，人也找不著他，因為神已經把他接去了；只是他被接去以先，已經得了神喜悅他的明證。人非有信就不能得神的喜悅，因為到神面前來的人必須信有神，且信他賞賜那尋求他的人。挪亞因著信，既蒙神指示他未見的事，動了敬畏的心，預備了一隻方舟，使他全家得救；因此就定了那世代的罪，自己也承受了那從信而來的義… 這些人都是因信得了美好的證據，卻仍未得著所應許的。因為神給我們預備了更美的事，叫他們若不與我們同得，就不能完全。

這段經文描繪很多信心的偉人在歷世歷代中把信心的錨緊靠在神中，然而到了經文的末尾，作者提醒我們—縱使他們的生命可作為信心的典範，但是他們沒有一人是得到所應許的，神給我們一個更好的計劃：就是他們的信心和我們的信心相合成為一個完全的整體，他們信心的生活缺少我們的部份便不能整全(參 希伯來書11：39-40，The Message 中譯)。這些人都是因信得了美好的證據，卻仍未得著所應許的；因為神給我們預備了更美的事，叫他們若不與我們同得，就不能完全。

神給了我們這一群忠實跟隨祂的人一個偉大的計劃，我們的信心合成為一個完全的整體，就像拼圖的塊片，祂把我們合成在一起去彰顯和榮耀祂，記著這幅圖畫，即使遇見我們對祂的應許看不清楚的時候，它能幫助我們信心得以堅固，信靠神已為我們安排了一個更美好的計劃！

### 生命探索習作

繼續去完成現在的步驟

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## 第五週 分享神的故事和我們的故事 第四天

# 神以信實恩待我

### ■ 申命記7:1-10

「耶和華你神領你進入要得為業之地，從你面前趕出許多國民，就是赫人、革迦撒人、亞摩利人、迦南人、比利洗人、希未人、耶布斯人，共七國的民，都比你強大。耶和華你神將他們交給你擊殺，那時你要把他們滅絕淨盡，不可與他們立約，也不可憐恤他們。不可與他們結親。不可將你的女兒嫁他們的兒子，也不可叫你的兒子娶他們的女兒，因為她必使你兒子轉離不跟從主，去侍奉別神，以致耶和華的怒氣向你們發作，就速速地將你們滅絕。你們卻要這樣待他們：拆毀他們的祭壇，打碎他們的柱像，砍下他們的木偶，用火焚燒他們雕刻的偶像。因為你歸耶和華你神為聖潔的民，耶和華你神從地上的萬民中揀選你，特做自己的子民。耶和華專愛你們，揀選你們，並非因你們的人數多於別民，原來你們的人數在萬民中是最少的。只因耶和華愛你們，又因要守他向你們列祖所起的誓，就用大能的手領你們出來，從為奴之家救贖你們脫離埃及王法老的手。所以，你要知道耶和華你的神，他是神，是信實的神：向愛他守他誡命的人守約施慈愛，直到千代；向恨他的人當面報應他們，將他們滅絕—凡恨他的人，必報應他們，決不遲延。

神以祂的主權和恩典特別揀選以色列人，並向他們守約施永遠的慈愛。雖然他們時常不專心倚靠祂，神的信實卻永不改變。

當我們接受基督的愛和十字架的救贖之時，因著信我們是亞伯拉罕的兒女，因此也是神的兒女(參 加拉太書3:7-9)。神愛我們，祂的信實歷久不變，請用些時間去思考神的信實如何助我們走過人生中每一個階段！

### 生命探索習作

繼續去完成現在的步驟

## 神認識我海般深

### ■ 耶利米書 1:4-8

耶利米說：耶和華的話臨到我說：「我未將你造在腹中，我已曉得你；你未出母胎，我已分別你為聖。我已派你做列國的先知。」我就說：「主耶和華啊！我不知怎樣說，因為我是年幼的。」耶和華對我說：「你不要說『我是年幼的』，因為我差遣你到誰那裡去，你都要去，我吩咐你說什麼話，你都要說。你不要懼怕他們，因為我與你同在，要拯救你。」這是耶和華說的。

神有一個使命給每個人，即使可能我們自覺不配或力有不逮成為履行祂使命的一份子，我們在母腹成形以前，神就認識了我們，當我們還未出生，神早已把我們分別出來（參 耶利米書 1:5），所以不要害怕投入使命，因為聖靈時常都在引導我們！

在我們的「生命探索」習作中，我們會發現神一直在塑造我們的生命去配合祂的旨意，神的恩典在我們出生的時候已環繞我們，我們的使命就是透過分享我們的故事把祝福帶給別人去見證神的信實。

### 生命探索習作

繼續去完成現在的步驟

## 第一步：界定你生命的章程

將你生命劃分為幾個具邏輯性的時序，從出生到現在為止。你可以將你的生命劃分至多達七個年期，但劃分為更少的年期則效果更佳。以下表格顯示出一個劃分生命年期的方案，為你提供思考的空間來草擬你的生命章程。請使用已編號的空格來填寫你劃分年期的標題，你可以選擇以年齡、讀書和工作的年期，地理位置或其他情況作為基礎，將你的生命劃分為不同的時序，它們將標誌著你生命故事中不同的章程。

請特別留意你接受主耶穌的那一年。現在你已選定主要的年期，它們將成為你生命故事的基本架構。

### 屬靈操練：休息

神重視你的全人，包括你的思想，你的身體和你的靈魂，它們是合一，不能分割的。當你的身體疲憊，你便無法追求一個與神更親密的關係，你也不能對神在你的生命中的作為有一個更深切的了解。因此，你必需把你生命的步伐減緩下來，並且好好休息，這樣你的心靈才能有空間，讓神更深的居住其中。

在這個星期，嘗試約束自己，用多一些時間來休息。休息是一個記號，表示你信靠神，順服祂的主權，並容許祂來好好的照顧你。願你在祂裡面找到安息之所！

劃分生命年期方案樣本	生命故事章程方案
0—11歲 (小學)	
12—17歲 (中學)	
18—28歲 (年青人, 接受主耶穌)	
29—38歲 (婚後生活)	
39—58歲 (移民到加拿大)	
59—65歲 (空巢)	

## 「生命探索」習作

### 第二步：界定你生命故事中的人和事

你現已確定你生命故事中的章程劃分。請認真思想你的人生經歷和人際關係。如何對應你每一段的人生年期，在這集思廣益的過程中，請慢慢的，有條理的仔細思想。當你做這習作時，你會發現你正在尋求這基本問題的答案—「是甚麼主要的關係和經歷塑造了我的生命？」以下的資料，我們稱之為4H（Heritage背景、Heroes英雄、High Points高峰、Hard Times低谷），這4H可以助你解答這問題。

請使用第47頁的「生命探索」章程記錄表來記錄以下問題的答案。（因每一生命故事章程需要一份「生命探索」章程記錄表，請影印副本作記錄使用）

#### 背景 (Heritage)

背景是指過去對我們造成的綜合影響，乃是神藉此來編寫我們的故事，塑造我們的性情，以及帶領我們成為今日的我們。背景包括了原生家庭的影響、地理環境、天生才能，遺傳基因以及脾性。

- 我的父母或主要照顧者如何對我造成影響？
- 在我成長過程中，我家庭一般的氣氛如何？
- 我的種族和文化背景如何在我的生命中發揮重要作用？
- 這些年來，我與朋輩之間的關係是怎樣的？為甚麼會這樣？
- 地理環境因素如何對我造成影響？

#### 英雄(Heroes)

英雄是指那些透過言語和行動對我們的生命留下明顯正面影響的人，他們幾乎可以是任何一個人：例如：父親或母親、親戚、鄰居、老師、朋友或教練等。英雄也可以是那些跟你素未謀面的人，如政治領袖或歷史人物。英雄就是以一種可以改變你生命的方式來觸動你。

當你仔細思想這類別時，請問自己以下問題：

- 誰人曾對我造成美好的影響？

- 誰人的生命是我學效的榜樣？為甚麼？
- 誰人曾給我鼓舞和激勵？為甚麼？
- 誰人曾塑造我的性情或指引我生命的方向？如何？為甚麼？

#### 高峰 (High Points)

高峰是指那些你人生中最美好和最滿足的季節或經歷。這些時光包括贏取區際比賽冠軍、獲得優等生榮譽、獲頒獎章、渡過一個愉快的假期、探訪一位遠方的朋友、享受一年平靜的家庭生活、經歷兩年滿足的工作生涯，或者剛結婚時的美滿婚姻生活等等。

當你仔細思想這類別時，請問自己以下問題：

- 那些成就給我帶來滿足感或特別意義？如何？為甚麼？
- 那些事件或人物為我帶來極大的歡樂？
- 在我人生中有那些時光使我特別感到生命的美好？為甚麼？
- 那些時候我曾對其他人作出最大的貢獻？如何？

#### 低谷 (Hard Times)

低谷是指那些你人生中最困難和最痛苦的季節或經歷，如童年時轉換另一間學校，在適應上遇困難，導致與人相處上築了圍牆，從此很難打破人際隔膜；又可能與人關係上破裂，未曾復和。

當你仔細思想這類別時，請問自己以下問題：

- 在我人生中有那些事件令我對人難以啟齒？為甚麼？
- 誰人或甚麼事是我人生痛苦的根源？何時？為甚麼？
- 我對誰人仍懷怒或懷怨？我正在掙扎要原諒誰？
- 誰人或甚麼事叫我非常失望？為甚麼？
- 我曾經歷那些不公平的待遇，使我感到非常難受？
- 在我或其他人的生命中有過甚麼癮癖或被虐待的經歷？

請將你所有的思想寫在「生命探索」章程記錄表上，使用一張記錄表來反思你每一段人生年期中的

4H（背景、英雄、高峰、低谷）。當你回顧你人生歲月的時候，請務要禱告，求主幫助你記起那些成為你人生轉捩點的事件，如何彰顯祂撰寫你人生美善的章程。

### 屬靈操練：感恩

騰出一些時間，為神撰寫你的人生向祂表達感謝之情。重讀你所列出的經歷和關係，回想那些地方令你心存感激。你也可以聯絡你昔日的舊友，以表達你的感恩，告訴他們神如何使用他們造就你的生命。

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## 「生命探索」習作

### 第三步：辨認形成你生命故事的元素

下一步，你需要將每一個形成你生命故事的經歷或關係進行分類。以下兩個段落有助界定你將使用之標籤的意義。因此，在進行標籤之前，請先閱讀這兩段落。這部份的「生命探索」習作有助你辨認神在你生命中的作為。假如你在辨認的過程中遇到障礙，千萬不要沮喪。只要稍停一會兒，然後禱告，求聖靈引導你，向你顯現祂在你身上的作為。

#### 認識你生命故事中的意義和目的

請使用以下問題，思想和判斷每一個形成你生命故事的經歷或關係背後的意義和目的：

- 這個經歷或關係如何塑造我（我的態度、觀點、習慣或價值觀）？
- 從這個經歷或關係中我學會甚麼功課？
- 這個經歷或關係如何影響我對神的看法？對人的看法？
- 為何神要將它帶進我的生命之中？
- 它帶來甚麼一好的還是壞的一影響？

將MP（意義和目的）寫在任何形成你生命故事的經歷或關係的旁邊，因為你知道它們對你的人生故事具有特殊的意義和目的。並寫下筆記，以助你記起與這經歷或關係相關的意義和目的。

#### 認識你生命故事中的信心轉捩點

進行「生命探索」習作本身就是一種信心的操練。你需要在不同程度上運用信心。首先，你需要用信心來述說神在你生命中的作為有一個整體的計劃，祂希望你對此進行反思，並且漸漸地欣賞祂在你身上彰顯祂奇妙的作為。你也需要相信你用在禱告，反思和寫作的時間是非常值得的，因為你將會對你的人生有更多從來沒有想過的發現。

同時，當你對你人生計劃中所出現的某些元素不明所以時，你需要用信心來繼續撰寫你的故事章程。你可能無法辨認某些形成你生命故事的經歷或關係背後的意義和目的，你遇見這困難是正常的，因為這些經歷或關係就是你的「信心轉捩點」

。儘管你現在不能辨認它們的意義，你仍可選擇用信心繼續前行，相信神有祂的主權在你的身上，祂是信實的，祂本為善，祂對你的心意總是美善的。因為你現在所看見的故事仍未完整，當你的故事被完全揭開時，信心轉捩點便會最終成為合理的依據。

當你繼續忍耐地活出你的故事，你的信心會讓你對你生命的意義和目的漸漸清晰起來。不過，某些經歷或關係有可能在整个人生中仍需要用心來接受。你可能要用信心來接受某些不公平，不幸及痛苦的遭遇，而沒法獲得最終的答案。縱然你可以明白從中所得的好處，將人生某些成果與之相連，或者發現你的事奉正源於此，但有些事件可能始終在神的主權下成為無法解答的奧秘。

在那些你無法找到意義和目的的地方，你必需用信心來面對！將FP（信心轉捩點）寫在任何形成你生命故事的經歷或關係的旁邊。此時，你的習作上每個經歷或關係的旁邊皆應當有MP或FP的標籤。

### 屬靈操練：遊戲

你可能奇怪為何遊戲是一種屬靈操練。雖然遊戲看似無聊，以及純粹只為了好玩，它其實涉及隨機性在其中。在遊戲當中會出現許多意料之外及無法預期的事情，如網球遊戲中的網球如何反彈，是你不能預知的，你無法預計你對手下一步的行動，因此在遊戲中，你需要學習放鬆和放手。你讓無法預知的事情臨到你身上，然後你從容面對它們。James Bryan Smith 指出：「『隨機應變』是遊戲中其中一種的屬靈益處，我們學習放手，我們放鬆自己，容讓自己變成脆弱，無論發生甚麼事情也開敞自己。我們遊戲是因為我們知道神是美善的，祂的恩典是足夠我們用的。神想我們的生命充滿喜樂，而遊戲乃是經驗神的美善和豐盛的生命的一種途徑。」（Good and Beautiful Life 美善及美麗人生，第46頁）這星期，讓我們學習以喜樂的心來遊戲，一起放鬆和放手！

## 「生命探索」習作

### 第四步：認識你自己及你生命故事的作者

當你一旦確定你生命故事中的經歷或關係時，你便要反思你如何從中認識神及認識自己。當你禱告及默想每一件形成你生命故事的事件時，請問你自己以下問題：

1. 作為撰寫我人生的作者，神透過這關係或經歷如何揭示關於祂自己？
  - 祂的屬性
  - 祂的性情
  - 祂的作為
2. 神透過這關係和經歷如何揭示關於我自己：我生命中主要的性情？
  - 我的脾性
  - 我的強項
  - 我的弱點
  - 我的價值觀

將你想到的答案寫在你「生命探索」章程記錄表中「我從中認識神甚麼？」及「我從中認識自己甚麼？」兩部份上。

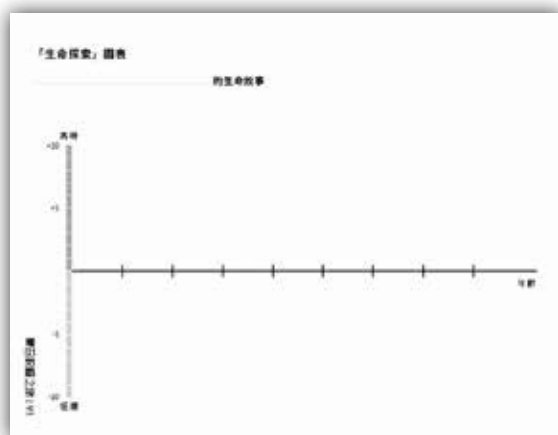
### 屬靈操練：默想經文

用一些時間閱讀及默想對你人生曾有特殊影響的經文。進深默想這些經文，思想神如何用祂的話語來塑造你對祂、對自己和對世界的看法。請將這些經文及有關思想筆記下來。

## 「生命探索」習作

### 第五步：界定主題及描繪你生命故事圖表

現在，你已掌握構成你生命故事之元素的一些了解，並且對神、對自己有一些洞悉，你應當問自己，我生命中不同的部份如何彼此相連？當你思想不同的人、事所學到的功課可以如何彼此相連時，你會發現你生命故事的主題。在文學作品中，主題乃是作者試圖與讀者溝通的重點所在。主題解答了「這故事是關於甚麼的？」，主題往往令人費解，叫人不斷思索，直至完成界定生命中大部份故事形成的元素。然後，再瀏覽當中的發現，漸漸一些主題便會隨之冒起，因為當中有一些議題是不斷重複出現和面對的。



將你生命故事中發生的事件繪畫在「生命探索」圖表上（第49頁），那裡標明高峰在橫線上，低谷在水平線下，將MP（意義和目的）及FP（信心轉捩點）記在你的圖表中。你可以參考我們提供的樣本，就是聖經中的約瑟，他生命的主題被界定為「倚靠我在地上的父親」、「倚靠我在天上的父親」、「活在傷痛之中」，以及「復和帶來醫治」。

## 第五週

### 分享神的故事和我們的故事 講道回應/小組討論 — 指引

此指引的目的是幫助你去重溫和應用講道的信息並把它個人化，這是和閱讀每週主題文章和靈修材料一起做的。

#### 1. 重溫講道的信息(15分鐘)

- a. 你認為講道的信息嘗試去探討或處理的問題是甚麼？請與小組分享。

- b. 講員如何透過講道的信息回答這個問題？主題文章如何幫助你去回答這個問題？

#### 2. 應用講道的信息(60分鐘)

- a. 請分享一個給你認識生命意義和目的之成長經歷和/或關係(那些有MP記號的)

它怎樣讓你認識神？

它怎樣讓你認識自己？

神如何影響和改變了你的生命？

- b. 請分享一個你憑信心倚靠神而你卻不能完全明白的成長經歷和/或關係(那些有FP記號的)

如果你沒有認識耶穌基督，你對這個經歷和/或關係將會有甚麼不同的理解？



.....

當你接受耶穌基督為你的救主，現在你的生命有了怎樣的改變？

.....

神如何影響和改變了你的生命？

.....

- c. 查看約瑟的生命探索圖表的例子，在他的人生裡經歷了很大的波折。最初約瑟並不明白那些傷害他令他痛苦的事情背後的原因，隨著時間的過去，他最後明白神在他身上的工作是為要把祝福帶給別人。約瑟說：「從前你們的意思是要害我，但神的意思原是好的，要保全許多人的性命，成就今日的光景。」(創50:20)

現在查看你的「生命探索」圖表，分享神如何使用你的生命故事去祝福別人。

.....

.....

- d. 立志與一位未信主的朋友分享你的生命故事並為此禱告，當你分享你的故事時，要回答以下重要的問題：

神如何影響和改變了你的生命？

.....

.....

還有，要留意機會把基督的福音向他/她講解。請用以下的空位，寫下至少一位未信主的朋友是你決定要向他分享你的生命故事。

未信朋友的名字：

.....

年齡組別: 17至30歲

主題: 倚靠我在天上的父

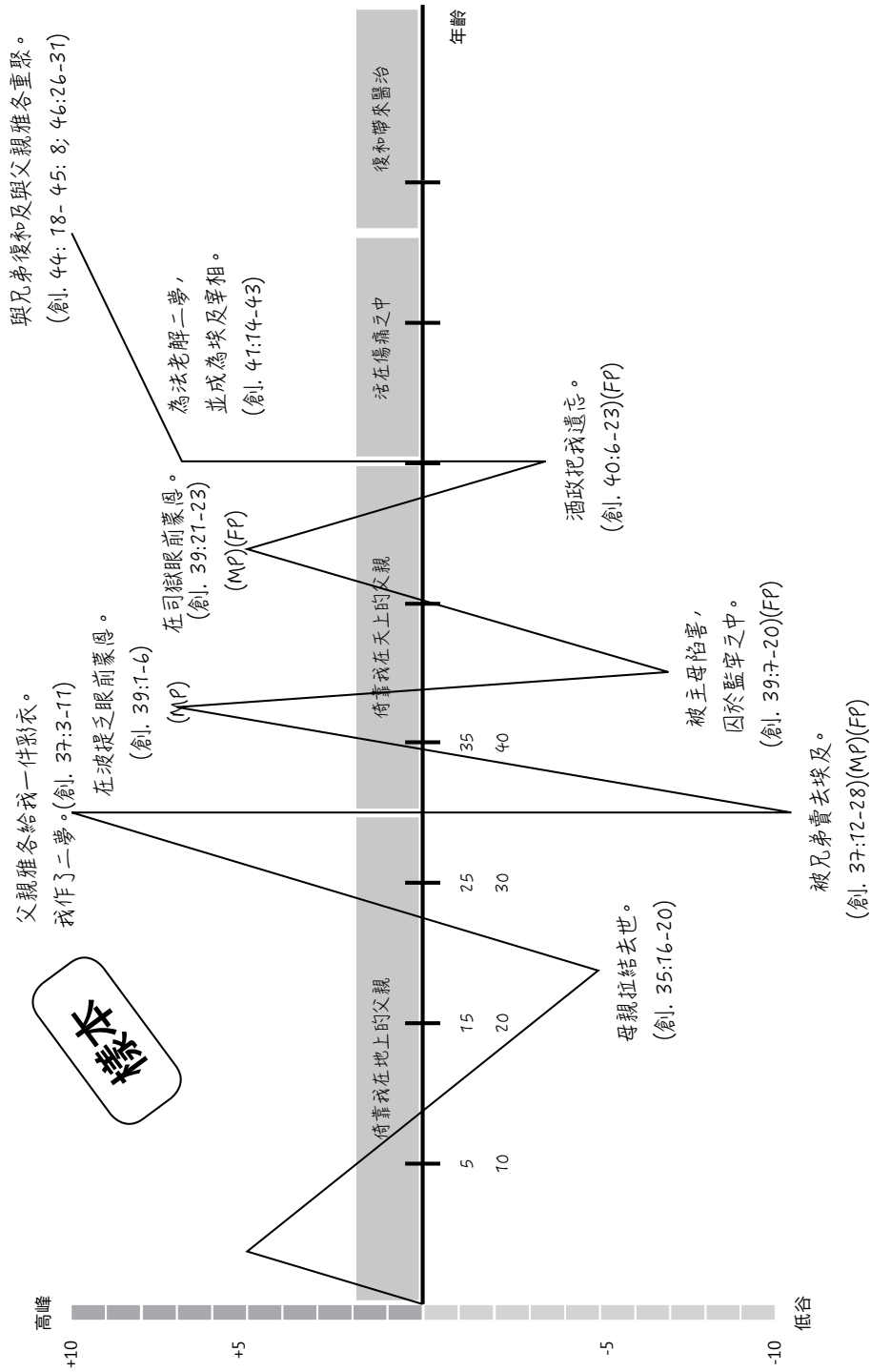
	經歷及人際關係	筆記
<b>背景 (Heritage)</b> 那些地理上的、種族上的，或者家庭上的因素早已對你造成影響？如何影響？為甚麼？	自從我的兄弟將我賣到埃及後，我的人生便開始逆轉。我離開了一生中最疼愛我、保護我的父親。(MP)(FP)	有一段很長的時間，我無法明白為何這事竟臨到我身上！後來我才恍然大悟，了解最終的愛和保護只有來自神，而非來自人。
<b>英雄 (Heros)</b> 那些人際關係對你帶來關鍵性的正面影響？	我在我埃及主人波提乏的眼前蒙恩，他信任我，派我管理他家中一切所有。(MP)	
<b>高峰 (High Points)</b> 那些經歷使你最津津樂道？為甚麼？那些經歷顯示了你特別的才能？	我成為主人家中最高總管，只有主人在我之上。(MP)  縱然我被囚在監裡，神與我同在，向我施恩，使我在司獄的眼前蒙恩。他把監裡所有的囚犯都交給我管理，我一切所做的盡都順利。(MP)(FP)	當我臻達人生的高峰時，我的試練也隨之而來。  無論周遭環境有多困難，我仍然忠心事主，因為我信靠神，我將我的生命完全交托在祂的手裡。
<b>低谷 (Hard Times)</b> 那些經歷令你感到特別痛苦？為甚麼？它們讓你感覺如何？它們如何影響你的生命？	我主人的妻子引誘我與她同睡，但我不肯。她誣陷我，使我被囚在監牢裡。(FP)  我關心王的酒政及膳長，為他們解夢。我真的很期望酒政恢復原職之後，可以救我脫離這監牢。但他卻忘記了我，他令我太失望了！(FP)	為何當我選擇敬畏神，不願犯罪以致得罪祂，卻換來坐牢的下場？我真的非常困惑，我的心也碎了！為何我對主的信心會給我帶來接二連三的痛苦和失望？
<b>我從中認識神甚麼？</b>	當我將生命交托給神，我充分體驗到祂的慈愛與信實。祂對我的保護和供應也超乎我的意料之外！驕然回首，我才明瞭神容許試煉臨到我身上，是要潔淨我、堅固我對祂的信心。只有神最了解我，知道用甚麼方法才可破碎我的老我和重建我的生命，這一切都是祂的恩典！	
<b>我從中認識自己甚麼？</b>	我被賣去埃及之前，我是一個自負和自我中心的人。後來主讓我經歷那些使我傷痛的遭遇，就是我被我的兄弟出賣、我被我的主母陷害，以及王的酒政把我忘了，原來是要破碎我的生命。現在回望過去種種，我感謝神與我同行，祂帶領我經過百般試煉，藉此塑造我的性情。我漸漸將目光從自我轉移到其他人身，並開始關心身邊周圍的人的需要。我也學會信靠神和耐心等候祂的拯救。縱然我經過生命中許多的風暴，猶如過山車一樣的人生旅程，我卻無悔今生，因為神已讓我成為別人的祝福！	

年齡組別: \_\_\_\_\_ 主題: \_\_\_\_\_

	經歷及人際關係	筆記
<b>背景 (Heritage)</b> 那些地理上的、種族上的，或者家庭上的因素早已對你造成影響？如何影響？為甚麼？		
<b>英雄 (Heros)</b> 那些人際關係對你帶來關鍵性的正面影響？		
<b>高峰 (High Points)</b> 那些經歷使你最津津樂道？為甚麼？ 那些經歷顯示了你特別的才能？		
<b>低谷 (Hard Times)</b> 那些經歷令你感到特別痛苦？為甚麼？它們讓你感覺如何？它們如何影響你的生命？		
我從中認識神甚麼？		
我從中認識自己甚麼？		

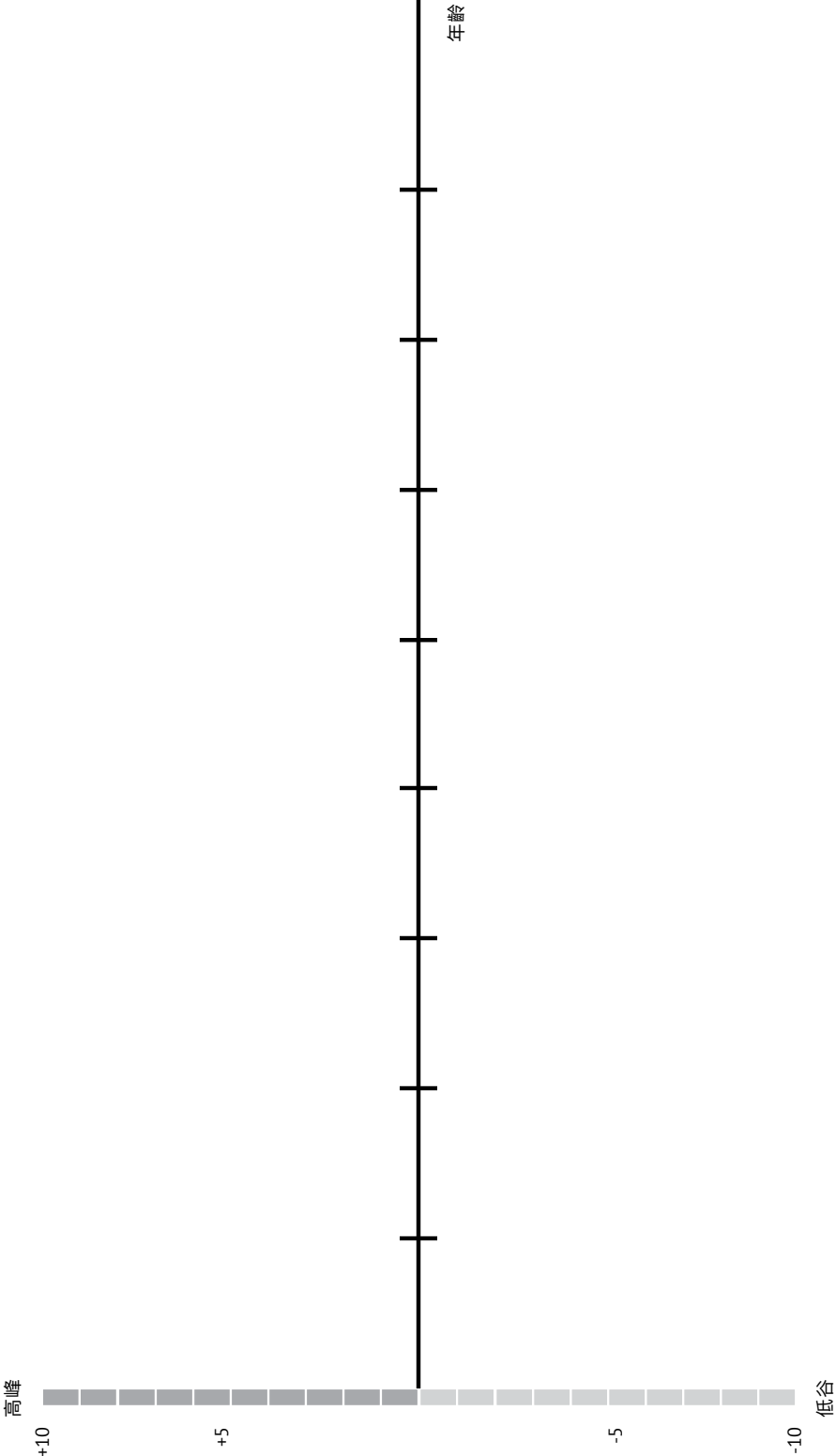
約瑟(從出生至三十八歲)

的生命故事



「生命探索」圖表

的生命故事



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## 「蒙召祝福之旅」查經一

■ 馬太福音 9:35-10:1

### 引言:

耶穌透過祂的教導(天國的宣告Kingdom Proclamation)，和祂的行動上(天國的彰顯Kingdom Demonstration)表明祂是彌賽亞的身份。祂也行了很多神蹟，反映天國已經臨在。耶穌差遣門徒收莊稼，因為有很多人正期待著天國的福音。作主耶穌的門徒要學效憐憫人的主，活出憐憫人的生命。

馬太福音記載著耶穌對門徒和眾人多篇的講論。聖經學者普遍將這些教導分成五組講論。第一篇講論是記載在5-7章的「登山寶訓」。今次查經的經文乃是耶穌第二篇差派門徒講論(太10章)的引子。

當時，耶穌在以色列地傳道已經有一段日子。作者在太9:35節，總括了耶穌三方面的工作：在會堂裏教訓人、宣講天國的福音、醫治各樣的病症。接下來，在第十章就記載著耶穌把權柄賜給十二個門徒。目的是叫門徒繼續祂的事工，把神的祝福帶給更多未信的人。

### 分享問題:

你曾有過「憐憫人」的經歷嗎？你當時曾作出甚麼行動來表達你對那需要被憐憫者的關心？

你認為甚麼事阻礙你去憐憫人？

### 經文查考:

1. 這段經文有甚麼人物出現？嘗試以想像投入的方法去，想想當時的環境和背景是怎樣？
2. 你對「耶穌走遍各城各鄉」這句話有何感想？(自由分享)
3. 耶穌的工作包括教訓人、宣講天國的福音和醫治三方面。試解釋這三方面的目的和意義。
4. 馬太在這段記載後，隨後便記載耶穌差十二個門徒出去繼續祂的工作。神若今天吩咐你出去為祂作工，你會怎樣回應呢？(自由分享)

### 生命實踐:

試分享現今神差你去到的禾場是在那裡？是家庭嗎？是鄰舍當中嗎？是工作間嗎？是學校嗎？

求神給你勇氣和智慧在你被派到的禾場中，為主作見證，把神的祝福帶給神預備你去接觸的人。(自由分享)

### 總結:

神的憐憫已經透過主耶穌十架的救贖彰顯出來了。你可能未曾有像耶穌對他人產生憐憫的體會。在這段教訓中，耶穌對門徒的吩咐卻是「...所以你們當求莊稼的主，打發工人去收祂的莊稼」。原來我們的責任是禱告神，求神差派不同的人為祂作工，帶領人歸向神，叫多人得著神的恩典和祝福。

當我們看到禾場的需要，開始為領人歸主的事禱告時，神往往會感動祈禱的人為祂作工。你願意這樣做嗎？

## 「蒙召祝福之旅」查經二

■ 羅馬書 12:1-21

### 引言:

整卷羅馬書教導的部分，簡單來說，可分為兩個大段。一至十一章是教義層面的教導，述說神奇妙救贖恩典的故事，好讓我們知道沒有甚麼使我們與基督的愛隔絕(參 羅8:35)；十二章至十五章十三節是實際生活層面的教訓，目的是要信徒將基督的教導「生活化」。這包括信徒之間關係的建立—如彼此相愛、尊重和互相接納。信徒對未信的也當以愛相待，不可咒詛那些逼迫自己的人。此外，對社會的責任，信徒當順服掌權者。

基督耶穌已把自己成為挽回祭，獻給神，叫一切相信祂的得著救恩。所以，保羅也很直接要求信徒「把身體獻上當作活祭獻給神」。信徒當每天過著「分別為聖」的生活，全然委身於神，是每個信徒回應主的救贖恩典所要作的，也是表明過一個討神喜悅的生活的意向。然而察驗出甚麼是神的旨意，和美好的事情，是至為重要！

### 分享問題:

你如何形容自己的「待人之道」？如你在處理與家人、朋友、弟兄姊妹，同事之間的關係上，持著怎樣的態度或原則。

### 經文查考:

1. 請把這章經文分成三個段落，並給每段加上簡潔的標題。
2. 在第一分段(1-2 節)，保羅勸導我們「所以弟兄們，我以神的慈悲勸你們，將身體獻上，當作活祭，是聖潔的，是神所喜悅的，你們如此侍奉，乃是理所當然的」。保羅一開始說「所以」，是「因為」甚麼原因？甚麼是「將身體獻上，當作活祭」？
3. 接著，保羅就提出兩個要求，教導我們當如何實踐以上的教導。試把它們找出來，並加以解釋。
4. 從第二分段(3-8節)中，「不要看自己過於所當看的....，看得合乎中道」是甚麼意思？在你事奉的經驗中，曾否落入這個思想中？試分享你當時的心路歷程。

5. 在第二分段(3-8節)中，保羅列出有七樣恩賜。請把它們列出來。
6. 神給你那方面的恩賜？你願意如何被神使用來建立信徒羣體？  
(自由分享)
7. 在第三分段(9-21節)中，保羅的教訓針對信徒在人際關係上應持有的態度。他藉多個正面和反面的例子把這些教導列舉出來。試細心閱讀這段經文，並分享有那些教導特別適用在這次蒙召祝福之旅？
8. 「...就是把炭火堆在他的頭上」(20節)是甚麼意思呢？你認為保羅在12:19-21節教導信徒當如何看待仇敵？

### 總結:

羅馬書12:9-21節是「實踐真愛」最大挑戰的教導。保羅一開始就指出「愛人不可虛假....」，這是指對任何人，都要以真愛相待。這包括家人、主內的弟兄姊妹、不信者，甚至是逼迫自己的人和仇敵。這段經文穿插着多個以正面和反面事例。保羅透過正反兩面的教導，表明甚麼是善，甚麼是惡。最終是要信徒明白應當存著一個合神心意的態度來面對人與人之間複雜的關係。

神要求我們活出真愛，其他人因而看到又感受到神的大愛。神的祝福就藉此被帶給周圍的人。雖然這不是容易的事，你願意活出這「實踐真愛」的功課嗎？

## APPENDIX D

### CALLED TO B.L.E.S.S. DEVOTION THEMES AND THEIR PASSAGES

#### WEEK 1: BEGIN WITH WORSHIP AND PRAYER (GOSPEL OF MATTHEW)

Devotion: Day 1:	Worship and Mission	Matthew 4:1-11
Devotion: Day 2:	Jesus Connects with the Father	Matthew 14:15-23
Devotion: Day 3:	Seek God's Kingdom First	Matthew 6:5-13
Devotion: Day 4:	Pray with Faith	Matthew 21:18-22
Devotion: Day 5:	Keep Watch and Pray	Matthew 26:36-46

#### WEEK 2: LISTEN (GOSPEL OF JOHN)

Devotion: Day 1:	Jesus Listens to the Lonely	John 4:1-26
Devotion: Day 2:	Jesus Listens to the Desperate	John 5:1-9
Devotion: Day 3:	Listen to Each Other Like Jesus	John 10:1-18
Devotion: Day 4:	Jesus Listens to the Hurt	John 11:32-45
Devotion: Day 5:	Jesus Listens to the Father	John 5:19-24

#### WEEK 3: EAT MISSIONALLY (GOSPEL OF LUKE)

Devotion: Day 1:	Gracious Inclusion	Luke 5:27-32
Devotion: Day 2:	Eating with Adversaries	Luke 7:36-50
Devotion: Day 3:	Meeting Others' Needs even when Tired	Luke 9:12-17
Devotion: Day 4:	Being Extravagantly Generous	Luke 14:7-15
Devotion: Day 5:	Unconditional Acceptance	Luke 19:1-10

#### WEEK 4: SERVE LIKE JESUS (GOSPEL OF MARK)

Devotion: Day 1:	Serve for the Sake of the Gospel	Mark 8:34-38
Devotion: Day 2:	Serve to Sacrifice	Mark 10:35-45
Devotion: Day 3:	Serve to Give Jesus the Best	Mark 14:3-9
Devotion: Day 4:	Serve as Humble Servant	Mark 9:33-37
Devotion: Day 5:	Serve with Complete Obedience to God	Mark 15:25-39



## APPENDIX E

### CALLED TO B.L.E.S.S. SERMON DISCUSSION OUTLINE

*This guide aims to help you to review, personalize and apply the sermons, along with the weekly featured articles and the devotion readings.*

#### **1. Review the Sermon (15 minutes)**

- a) Can you think of a question that you believe the sermon message was trying to address or resolve? Share your question with the group.
  - How did the speaker answer this question through the sermon message?
  - How did the featured article help in answering this question?
- b) Which attributes of God were stated or implied by the sermon message?
- c) If you were tasked to give a one minute summary of the sermon message for a group member who was absent, what would you say?

#### **2. Personalize the Sermon (20 minutes)**

- a) What did you hear that encouraged and reassured you?
- b) What did you hear that challenged and convicted you?

#### **3. Apply the Sermon (20 minutes)**

- a) What personal application of the message has the Lord revealed to you?
  - How can you apply this message and integrate the "Weekly Challenges" into your life?
- b) If you were to diligently apply the message, what effect would it have on your schedule, choices, relationships, ministries, and daily walk with Christ?

## APPENDIX F

### WEEKLY PRAYER ITEMS BEFORE THE JOURNEY

#### **WEEK 1: JAN 31, 2016**

Please continue to help us by inviting brothers and sisters to be our prayer warriors. Please send us their names and email addresses so that we can contact them. We would like to start the group prayer beginning this coming Sunday during the transition period (right after the morning service till around 10:45am) and we will continue doing so every Sun until the scheduled events finish in early May. We will meet on the left side at the front of S1.

#### **Prayer Items:**

- Pray that God will use all of us to bless the people around us
  - Pray for the preparation of the "Called to B.L.E.S.S." journey: Weekly sermons, daily devotions, weekly small group gatherings, preparation of all materials and small group leaders training.
  - Pray that God will prepare prayer warriors. Our target will be 31 brothers and sisters continue to pray for the journey.
- 

#### **WEEK 2: FEB 7, 2016**

Thanks God for moving your hearts to be the prayer warrior for the "Called to B.L.E.S.S." journey. Let's listen to God's guidance through prayers.

We will continue to meet inside Sanctuary1 at the left hand front corner every Sunday after the 8:45 a.m. service for group prayer. If you cannot make it, it is O.K., just join us in prayers.

The following are the prayer items:

- 1) God will prepare us to be channels of blessing to other people.
- 2) The preparation for cell group leaders' training, weekly sermons, daily devotion, weekly cell group meeting.
- 3) Pray for all the teams' preparation:

- 4) Curriculum team: Pastor Julian, Pastor Gloria, Pastor Sophia, Miriam Chau, Thomson Yu, Pastor Shu Ling and Pastor Michael.
- 5) Sermon team: Pastor Sam, Pastor Julian and Pastor Virginia
- 6) Translation Team: Shelley Chan, KC Lau and Eric P.W. Li
- 7) Promo team: Carmen Sin and Moses Wong
- 8) God will raise up more prayer warriors.
- 9) The Holy Spirit will guide through the “Life Discovery” Exercise
- 10) Our willingness to be a mature disciple and bless other people.

---

### **WEEK 3: FEB 14, 2016**

The Called to B.L.E.S.S. journey is a five-week sermon series to help brothers and sisters to discover their own mission through the five missional small group and individual practices to bless others.

We need a lot of volunteers to get involved in different preparation teams. We thank God that we have more and more brothers and sisters responding to the invitations. Below are the prayer items for this week:

- xi. God will prepare us to be channels of blessings to other people: Our willingness to be a mature disciple and bless other people.
- xii. Pray for all the teams' preparation:
- xiii. Curriculum team: Pastor Sam, Pastor Calvin, Pastor David, Pastor William, Pastor Kin Wah, Pastor Julian, Pastor Gloria, Pastor Sophia, Pastor Shu Ling, Pastor Michael, Miriam Chau, Thomson Yu (Thomson is trying to finish his bible study material today and do the translation as well).
- xiv. Sermon team: Pastor Sam, Pastor Julian and Pastor Virginia
- xv. Translation Team: KC Lau, Miriam Chau, Warren Li, Eric Li, Shelley Chan, Marie Li, Flora Wong, Simon Tam, Alfred Lee
  - a. Promotion team: Carmen Sin and Moses Wong (please pray for decoration ideas)
- xvi. The Holy Spirit will guide us through the Life Discovery Exercise
- xvii. Pray that more brothers & sisters will join the prayer team.
- xviii. Pray that God will protect all pastors; all work teams and prayer warriors.

#### **WEEK 4: FEB 21, 2016**

May the Holy Spirit continue to guard and guide us into the journey. This week we will especially pray for a Chinese Editor and the training sessions starting in March.

Below are the prayer items for this week:

- 🙏 May God provide a Chinese Editor to review the curriculum before sending it to the printer.
- 🙏 We pray for the Called to B.L.E.S.S. group leaders training starting in March. After the three week Called to B.L.E.S.S. training, we will have five weeks of committee and coaches training. And at the same time, five weeks of new apprentice leaders' trainings.
- 🙏 Pray for all the group leaders: a change of heart to be disciple makers.
- 🙏 Pray for more apprentice leaders.
- 🙏 Pray for all the teams' preparation:
- 🙏 Curriculum team: Pastor Sam, Pastor Calvin, Pastor David, Pastor William, Pastor Kin Wah, Pastor Julian, Pastor Gloria, Pastor Sophia, Pastor Shu Ling, Pastor Michael, Miriam Chau, Thomson Yu
- 🙏 Sermon team: Pastor Sam, Pastor Julian and Pastor Virginia
- 🙏 Translation Team: KC Lau, Miriam Chau, Warren Li, Eric Li, Shelley Chan, Marie Li, Flora Wong, Simon Tam, Alfred Lee
- 🙏 Promotion team: Carmen Sin and Moses Wong (please pray for decoration ideas)
- 🙏 The Holy Spirit will guide us through the "Life Discovery" Exercise
- 🙏 Pray that God will protect all pastors; all work teams and prayer warriors.

---

#### **WEEK 5: FEB 28, 2016**

Dear Prayer Warriors,

Prayers are indeed sustaining the "Called to B.L.E.S.S." journey. Below are the prayer items for this week.

Please note that as the group leaders training start next week, our prayer time will be held during the training session instead and we will not meet at the sanctuary on Sun to pray in March and we will resume doing that in April.

- 1) We should remember all leaders receiving the training. Including (All DNA mid-group and small group leaders, Ruth community, Kenya PEACE team).
- 2) We are assigning newcomers/ new believers in the DNA groups. New fellowship established – Samuel and Jeremiah middle age fellowships.

- 3) We are at simultaneously identifying apprentice leaders. Pray for a heart that leaders will become disciples of Christ and we also become disciple makers.
- 4) After three sessions of “Called to B.L.E.S.S.” training, we will have committee and coaches training (for new & refresh for existing) and small group leaders basic training.
- 5) Trainers team – Julian, Vickie, Ambrose, Leo, Eric, Sophia.
- 6) Please remember the worship and preachers team.
- 7) Pray that each of us will grow in our faith and establish a disciplined devotion habit.
- 8) In His grace we will reach out one more to Jesus and share our story with him/her.

NOTE: In March, we pray during the training sessions rather than in between worship services.

---

#### **WEEK 6: APRIL 3, 2016**

- 🕒 Give thanks to our Lord for all the DNA leaders who have recently completed the Called to B.L.E.S.S. training and the materials are ready on time.
- 🕒 Sermon team:
  - April 2/3– Pastor Julian
  - April 9/10– Pastor Julian
  - April 16/17– Pastor William
  - April 23/24– Pastor Virginia
  - April 30/ May 1– Pastor Julian
- 🕒 Smooth transition in assigning newcomers/new believes to the DNA cell groups to start the Journey together.
- 🕒 Through the journey, all of us will have a personal reflection and spiritual awakening.
- 🕒 The Holy Spirit will guide us through the “Life Discovery” Exercise.
- 🕒 We are able to share our life stories and God’s love with others.
- 🕒 God will protect all of us throughout the “Called to B.L.E.S.S.” journey.

## **WEEK 7: APRIL 10, 2016**

We had such a good worship and prayer meeting on Wednesday night. Thanks God for His guidance and we have already witness there is life transformation by the Holy Spirit among brothers & sisters. Please continue to pray together while we walk hand in hand throughout the journey.

Prayer items:

- 1) Give thanks to our Lord who guides us to begin our Called to B.L.E.S.S. journey on 2 April.
  - 2) All brothers & sisters have the spirit to long for walking with God and build a close relationship with Him.
  - 3) Wisdom for the cell group leaders and fellowship leaders to lead different DNA cell groups.
  - 4) Through the journey, there will be spiritual awakening and we can witness the transformation of our lives by God and we are willing to be the blessing to others.
  - 5) Sermon team:  
April 9/10 – Pastor Julian  
April 16/17 – Pastor William  
April 23/24 – Pastor Virginia  
April 30/ May 1 – Pastor Julian
  - 6) Newcomers who participate in the Called to B.L.E.S.S. journey among the DNA cell groups.
  - 7) We are able to share our life stories and God's love with others.
  - 8) God will protect all of us throughout the Called to B.L.E.S.S. journey
- 

## **WEEK 8: APRIL 17, 2016**

Prayer items:

Pray for trust and prayerfulness in the Called to B.L.E.S.S. groups.

- 1) We ask Him to grant leadership to coaches to lead small group leaders (disciple makers) in the journey.

- 2) We ask the Lord to grant discernment to small group leaders (disciple makers) in this spiritual journey.
  - 3) We pray that by His grace, He will make disciples that are committed to bless others.
  - 4) We pray in faith that He will bring disciples to love God more.
  - 5) We believe that He will grant faith to the distressed members and lead them closer to God.
  - 6) We trust that He will urge us to “listen to” others.
  - 7) Sermon team:  
April 16/17 – Pastor William  
April 23/24 – Pastor Virginia  
April 30/ May 1 – Pastor Julian
  - 8) Prayer meeting
  - 9) April 20 – Bring along your Prayer Partners & Pray for your friends
  - 10) May 4 – Encourage each other to write down the life story
  - 11) May 18 – Called to B.L.E.S.S. testimony night
- 

#### **WEEK 9: APRIL 24, 2016**

Praise the Lord! We had another great prayer meeting on Wednesday night and had many encouraging testimonies shared with us.

We have finished our 3<sup>rd</sup> week of the Called to B.L.E.S.S. journey, isn't it exciting? Looking forward to walk with all of you into the 4<sup>th</sup> week and learn to “Serve like Jesus”.

Prayer items:

4. God will motivate us to “Eat Missionally” and encourage us to invite new friends and those who are in needs.
5. Pray that God will guide us to use dining table as a mean to break the barriers and build up relationship with each other.
6. We pray that by His grace, He will make disciples that are committed to bless others.

7. “Eternity Evangelical Meeting” on 1 May, 2016 and more than 70 new friends are invited to attend the meeting.
8. Sermon team:  
April 23/24 – Pastor Virginia  
April 30/ May 1 – Pastor Julian
9. Prayer meeting  
May 4 – Encourage each other to write down the life story  
May 18 – Called to B.L.E.S.S. testimony night



# APPENDIX G

## THEME SONGS MUSIC SCORE SHEETS

### Song 1: "Called to B.L.E.S.S." journey music score sheet

A1, A2, B, C1, C2, Bridge  
A1, A2, B, C1, C2, Coda1, Coda 2

#### 蒙召祝福之旅

曲: Ivan Cheung, Teresa Lee

詞: Ivan Cheung

Last Revised: March 16, 2016

♩ = 98 [Intro] B $\flat$  E $\flat$  3 D D/F $\sharp$  Gm 3 E $\flat$  3 B $\flat$ /D 3 E $\flat$ /C F $^7$

9 [A] B $\flat$  F/A Gm B $\flat$ /F E $\flat$  E $\flat$ m  
邁步踏進蒙福使命旅程, 上帝的子民專心  
願上帝的榮光, 國度降臨, 在世間普照, 施恩

13 1. B $\flat$  G E $\flat$  F 2. B $\flat$  G  
跟主腳步, 承受美地, 是你應許. 醫治這地, 禱

17 C $\sharp$ m F [B] B $\flat$  F/A Gm B $\flat$ /F  
告, 跪拜, 萬口稱讚. 願效法主榜樣, 要體察基督真

23 Dm E $\flat$  F B $\flat$  G E $\flat$  F B $\flat$   
善美似火降聖靈, 在我心裡灼熱, 讓我生命, 化作活祭蒙  
(榮)

28 [C] E $\flat$  F Dm (B $\flat$ ) E $\flat$  F Gm E $\flat$  F  
召祝福之旅, 數算主恩年日裡. 以愛與寬恕, 說述  
耀主幸祝福我, 死蔭走過, 無懼怕. [Coda1] 向世界宣告, 國度

33 1. D Gm E $\flat$  E $\flat$  F 2. D 3 Gm  
傳頌十架為我歲月, 換上色彩 榮權能屬你奇妙

37 E $\flat$  F F $^7$  B $\flat$  [Bridge] A $\flat$  G $\flat$  [Coda2] (人在  
旅程, 見證上帝  
世途, 見證上帝)

**Song 1: “Called to B.L.E.S.S.” journey - English translation of the lyrics**

We step onto the journey of mission and blessing.

People of God, following the footsteps of the Lord, move toward the promise land.

May His kingdom come and may His light shine on this world.

May He heals this land so all tongues offer prayers and praises to Him.

We will live like Him so we can experience the goodness of God.

May the fire of the Holy Spirit consume us so we can offer ourselves as a sacrifice to Him

In the Called to BLESS journey, we count the blessings over the years.

We love and forgive to testify His great love.

The Lord has blessed us so we no longer fear, even in the valley of death.

We will proclaim to the world that Kingdom and power belong to Him alone.

We will be His witness on this journey!

## Song 2: The Spiritual Journey (I Truly Know)

Teresa Lee/Ivan Cheung

### 蒙召祝福之旅 靈程路上(我深知)

Teresa Lee

Piano

5 D G(add2) G Em A7 F#m G9 // Gm D A7  
晨 光 中, 尋 求 寂 靜 靈 語 裡, 細 訴 心 聲, 神 聲 音, 清 楚 聽 見, 親 愛 主, 祢 呼 喚

12 D D G(add2) G Em A7 F#m  
我。 存 謙 卑, 行 神 道 路, 來 信 靠, 效 法 基 督, 常 感 恩, 衷

19 G9 // Gm D A7 D D G  
心 讚 美, 親 愛 主 我 心 屬 祢。 願 作 枝 子 生 根 主 裡 面, 結 出

24 Em A7 D F# Bm E7 Em  
果 子 交 出 心 裡 念。 求 為 我 解 開 心 中 的 掙 扎。 體 恤 軟 弱 聽 我 禱

29 A D G Em A7  
告。 直 向 標 竿 奔 跑 主 窄 路, 靠 主 基 督 的 寶 血 救 贖, 求 讓 我

34 D F# G(omit3#11) G#o7 Em 1. A(sus4) D  
徹 醒 片 刻 專 心 禱 告, 容 讓 聖 靈 同 在 每 天。 帶 領 著 我。

39 Gmaj7 F#m7 Em7 Dmaj7 Gmaj7 F#m7/A# Bm Em F#  
天。 齊 奔 跑, 靈 程 路 上, 神 愛 裡 無 窮 力 量 神 應 許 不 丟 棄 我 給 信

49 2. A(sus4) Bb7 Eb Ab(add2) Fm Ab/Bb Bb7 Gm Ab9 // Abm  
心 勇 敢 直 往。 是 耶 穌, 祂 深 知 我, 恩 典 中 向 天 路 往。

57 Eb Bb7 Eb C7 Fm Eb/Bb Bb7 Ebmaj7

## **Song 2: The Spiritual Journey (I Truly Know) - English translation of the lyrics**

In the morning I seek quietness and I whisper from my heart to You  
I can clearly hear You calling me, my dear Lord  
I will walk humbly in God's way, trusting and living like the Lord.  
I will give thanks and praises to You always, and my heart belongs to You.

I want to be a branch abided in the Lord so I can bear fruits.  
Lord, heed my prayer and set me free from my struggles and weaknesses.

By His precious blood, I am saved and I can run toward the goal.  
I will watch and pray so the Holy Spirit will guide me every day.

With God's love, I have the power to run on the spiritual journey  
He promised to never leave or forsake me, and to give me the faith to press on.  
It is Jesus who knows me well. In His grace, I can continue on this heavenly journey.

## APPENDIX H

### PRAYER MEETINGS DURING CALLED TO B.L.E.S.S. JOURNEY

Date	Theme
April 6, 2016 (Wednesday)	Prayed for the whole journey which ended with Lord's Supper to send small group leaders out to lead small groups to embrace this missional learning journey
April 20, 2016 (Wednesday)	Prayed for embracing the missional practices such as Listen Like Jesus, Eat Missionally and Serve Like Jesus.
May 4, 2016 (Wednesday)	Video and live testimonies from brothers and sisters to witness what God is doing in their lives.
May 18, 2016 (Wednesday)	Concluded the journey with Lord's Supper. Brothers and sisters were sent out to BLESS others.



*Figure 1: Worship during Prayer Meeting on April 6, 2016 (Wednesday)*



*Figure 2: Observing Lord's Supper as sending small group leaders for the Called to B.L.E.S.S. Journey*



*Figure 3: Praying for the leaders and sending them out.*

## APPENDIX I

### CALLED TO B.L.E.S.S. SURVEY QUESTIONS

#### On Worship

##### W0

In the past two months, which church service did you usually attend? \*

Cantonese at RHCCC

Mandarin at RHCCC

English at RHCCC

Other church

None

##### W1

In the past two months, I felt that I went to church service primarily to respond to God's grace for me. \*

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Somewhat Agree

Agree

Strongly Agree

##### W2

In the past two months, I felt that during church service, I was reminded of how blessed I am because of what God has done for me. \*

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Somewhat Agree

Agree

Strongly Agree

##### W3

In the past two months, I felt being sent out to live missionally after church service. \*

"To Live Missionally" is to live out the gospel in everyday life. As we work, eat, rest, and socialize, we look for ways to serve the people around us in our neighborhood and city.

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Somewhat Disagree  
Somewhat Agree  
Agree  
Strongly Agree

**W4**

In the past two months, I felt being sent out to live missionally after partaking in the Holy Communion. \*

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Somewhat Disagree  
Somewhat Agree  
Agree  
Strongly Agree

**W5**

In the past two months, I felt that church service helped me live missionally. \*

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Somewhat Disagree  
Somewhat Agree  
Agree  
Strongly Agree

**W6**

In the past two months, I felt that what I did daily was a form of worship. \*

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Somewhat Disagree  
Somewhat Agree  
Agree  
Strongly Agree



## **On Prayer**

### **P1**

In the past two months, I have recognized God's blessings towards me during my prayer time. \*

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Somewhat Disagree  
Somewhat Agree  
Agree  
Strongly Agree

### **P2**

In the past two months, my prayers have focused more on praise and thanksgiving than on making requests \*

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Somewhat Disagree  
Somewhat Agree  
Agree  
Strongly Agree

### **P3**

In the past two months, my prayers have deepened my relationship with God. \*

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Somewhat Disagree  
Somewhat Agree  
Agree  
Strongly Agree

### **P4**

In the past two months, my prayers have changed the way I see the needs of people and of the community. \*

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Somewhat Disagree  
Somewhat Agree  
Agree  
Strongly Agree

**P5**

In the past two months, God has prompted me during my prayer time to serve the people around me. \*

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Somewhat Disagree  
Somewhat Agree  
Agree  
Strongly Agree

**P6**

In the past two months, God has strengthened me to live missionally through my prayers. \*

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Somewhat Disagree  
Somewhat Agree  
Agree  
Strongly Agree

**P7**

I have at least one prayer partner with whom I met regularly (e.g., once every two weeks) in the past two months. \*

Yes  
No

**P8**

If "Yes" to the previous question: In the past two months, the prayers of my prayer partner and me focused more on the needs of other people than on our own needs. If "No" to the previous question, choose "Not Applicable." \*

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Somewhat Disagree  
Somewhat Agree  
Agree  
Strongly Agree  
Not Applicable

## **On Others' Need**

### **N1**

In the past two months, I have paid attention to the physical/financial needs of someone I met in my daily life. \*

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Somewhat Disagree  
Somewhat Agree  
Agree  
Strongly Agree

### **N2**

In the past two months, I have listened carefully to the needs of someone I met in my daily life. \*

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Somewhat Disagree  
Somewhat Agree  
Agree  
Strongly Agree

### **N3**

In the past two months, I have felt compelled to intentionally build a personal relationship with someone who does not know Jesus Christ as his or her personal savior. \*

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Somewhat Disagree  
Somewhat Agree  
Agree  
Strongly Agree

**N4**

In the past two months, I have followed my daily routine and felt reluctant to sacrifice my time and money to serve the needs of other people. \*

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Somewhat Disagree  
Somewhat Agree  
Agree  
Strongly Agree

**N5**

In the past two months, I have intentionally eaten with new people (with whom I did not usually eat) to build relationships. \*

Strong Disagree  
Disagree  
Somewhat Disagree  
Somewhat Agree  
Agree  
Strongly Agree

**N6**

In the past two months, I have intentionally eaten with new people (with whom I did not usually eat ) for the sake of discussing the Christian faith. \*

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Somewhat Disagree  
Somewhat Agree  
Agree  
Strongly Agree

**N7**

In the past two months, I have broken my daily routine and sacrificed my time and money to serve the needs of other people. \*

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Somewhat Disagree  
Somewhat Agree  
Agree  
Strongly Agree

**N8**

In the past two months, my small group has intentionally connected people who did not know Christ to our small group gatherings. \*

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Somewhat Agree

Agree

Strongly Agree

## **On Stories Sharing**

### **S1**

In the past two months, I felt that I could easily tell people my life story in a precise and concise way.

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Somewhat Disagree  
Somewhat Agree  
Agree  
Strongly Agree

### **S2**

In the past two months, I felt the meanings and purposes of what God has done in my life.

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Somewhat Disagree  
Somewhat Agree  
Agree  
Strongly Agree

### **S3**

In the past two months, when I told my life story, it was mainly about how God has blessed me (e.g., God's provision and protection).

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Somewhat Disagree  
Somewhat Agree  
Agree  
Strongly Agree

**S4**

In the past two months, I felt comfortable sharing what God has done in my life with my small group members. \*

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Somewhat Agree

Agree

Strongly Agree

**S5**

In the past two months, I felt that I knew what God has done in the lives of my small group members. \*

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Somewhat Agree

Agree

Strongly Agree

**S6**

In the past two months, I felt compelled to share with people who don't know Christ what God has done in my life. \*

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Somewhat Agree

Agree

Strongly Agree

**S7**

In the past two months, with how many people have you personally shared the gospel message of Jesus Christ? \*

Choose

- 0
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5-6
- 7-8
- 9-10
- 11 or more

**S8**

In the past two months, with how many people who do not know Christ have you personally shared what God has done in your life? \*

Choose

- 0
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5-6
- 7-8
- 9-10
- 11 or more

Gender \*

- Male
- Female

Age \*

- <20
- 20 to 29
- 30 to 39
- 40 to 49
- 50 to 59
- >= 60



OTH1

For how long you have accepted Christ? \*

< 2 years

2 to < 4 years

4 to < 6 years

6 to < 8 years

8 to < 10 years

>= 10 years

OTH2

What is your first language? \*

Cantonese

Mandarin

English

Other :

OTH3

What is your most fluent language? \*

Cantonese

Mandarin

English

Other :

OTH4

Which fellowship or small group do you attend at RHCCC? \*

Choose

Andrew

Caleb

Daniel

Enoch

Esther

Isaac

John

Joseph

Kairos

LTG

Luke

Matthew

Nehemiah

Nexis

Noah

Paul

Peter

Workers

OTH5

If you attend Life Transformation Group (LTG), please indicate your group leader's name

Your answer

Please indicate your ministry's name if it is outside of Discipleship Network Associates (DNA)

DNA is RHCCC's fellowship department. Your ministry may be under a different department (e.g. Ruth Sisters Support Group in Caring department).

## APPENDIX J

### CALLED TO B.L.E.S.S. POST JOURNEY ADDITIONAL SURVEY QUESTIONS

About Called to B.L.E.S.S. participation

Did you attend the following Cantonese worship services? Please check all that apply \*

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ April 2/3, 2016 Begin with Worship and Prayer
- ☐ April 9/10 Listen Like Jesus
- ☐ April 16/17 Eat Missionally
- ☐ April 23/24 Serve Like Jesus
- ☐ April 30/May 1 Share God's Stories and Our Stories
- ☐ NONE

Did you attend the small group that discussing lessons on the following topics? \*

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ Begin with Worship and Prayer
- ☐ Listen Like Jesus
- ☐ Eat Missionally
- ☐ Serve Like Jesus
- ☐ Share God's Stories and Our Stories
- ☐ NONE

Did you attend the following Cantonese prayer meetings? \*

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ April 6, 2016 Leaders Sent Off (Holy Communion)
- ☐ April 20, 2016 Listen Like Jesus/Eat Missionally
- ☐ May 4, 2016 Serve Like Jesus/Life Stories Sharing
- ☐ May 18, 2016 Testimonies Sharing (Holy Communion)
- ☐ NONE

In what percentage of workbook material you went through? \* *Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ 0-20%
- ☐ 21-40%
- ☐ 41-60%
- ☐ 61-80%
- ☐ 81-100%

## APPENDIX K

### ANALYSIS RESULTS

Table 3 Subject Demographics and Baseline Characteristics

	All Subjects (N=32) n (%)
Gender	
Female	14 (43.8%)
Male	18 (56.3%)
Age Category	
< 20	0
20-29	4 (12.5%)
30-39	26 (81.3%)
40-49	2 (6.3%)
50-59	0
≥ 60	0
Years as a Christian	
< 2 years	0
2 to < 4 years	1 (3.1%)
4 to < 6 years	4 (12.5%)
6 to < 8 years	0
8 to < 10 years	5 (15.6%)
≥ 10 years	22 (68.8%)
First Language	
Cantonese	30 (93.8%)
English	1 (3.1%)
Mandarin	1 (3.1%)
Most Fluent Language	
Cantonese	29 (90.6%)
English	2 (6.3%)
Mandarin	1 (3.1%)

Table 4 Summary of Mean Score Change (Post-Score minus Pre-Score) on Questions in Called to B.L.E.S.S. Questionnaire (By Gender)

	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]
	Pre-Score (SD)	Mean score change (post-minus pre-) (SD)	95% CI for the mean score change	Min-Max change	p-value (Paired t-test)	p-value (Wilcoxon signed-rank test)
On Worship						
Q1-Male (n=18)	4.6 (1.29)	0.33 (0.970)	-0.15, 0.82	-2 – 2	0.1631	0.2461
Q1-Female (n=14)	4.3 (1.49)	0.64 (1.277)	-0.09, 1.38	-1 – 4	0.0823	0.1250
Q2-Male (n=18)	4.7 (1.41)	0.06 (1.697)	-0.79, 0.90	-5 – 3	0.8912	0.7422
Q2-Female (n=14)	4.8 (1.12)	0.43 (1.016)	-0.16, 1.02	-2 – 2	0.1386	0.2188
Q3-Male (n=18)	4.1 (1.53)	0.44 (1.247)	-0.18, 1.06	-1 – 3	0.1489	0.1396
Q3-Female (n=14)	4.3 (0.99)	0.14 (1.167)	-0.53, 0.82	-2 – 2	0.6546	0.7500
Q4-Male (n=18)	3.7 (1.50)	0.56 (1.149)	-0.02, 1.13	-1 – 4	0.0560	0.0742
Q4-Female (n=14)	3.8 (1.12)	0.93 (1.072)	0.31, 1.55	-1 – 3	0.0064	0.0137
Q5-Male (n=18)	4.4 (1.38)	0.17 (1.043)	-0.35, 0.69	-2 – 2	0.5070	0.6152
Q5-Female (n=14)	4.0 (1.04)	0.36 (1.598)	-0.57, 1.28	-4 – 3	0.4182	0.2461
Q6-Male (n=18)	4.4 (1.24)	-0.22 (1.060)	-0.75, 0.31	-3 – 1	0.3863	0.6133
Q6-Female (n=14)	4.4 (0.84)	0.07 (1.542)	-0.82, 0.96	-3 – 2	0.8651	0.7500
On Prayer						
Q1-Male (n=18)	5.1 (0.96)	-0.17 (0.924)	-0.63, 0.29	-2 – 2	0.4544	0.6133

Q1-Female (n=14)	5.4 (0.63)	-0.57 (1.089)	-1.20, 0.06	-3 – 1	0.0715	0.1250
Q2-Male (n=18)	4.3 (1.24)	0.17 (1.618)	-0.64, 0.97	-3 – 3	0.6676	0.7305
Q2-Female (n=14)	4.1 (1.10)	0.29 (1.139)	-0.37, 0.94	-2 – 3	0.3649	0.5156
Q3-Male (n=18)	4.8 (1.11)	0.17 (0.924)	-0.29, 0.63	-2 – 1	0.4544	0.6133
Q3-Female (n=14)	4.9 (0.83)	0 (0.877)	-0.51, 0.51	-2 – 1	1.0000	1.0000
Q4-Male (n=18)	4.4 (1.46)	0.11 (1.641)	-0.70, 0.93	-3 – 4	0.7774	0.9521
Q4-Female (n=14)	3.9 (0.62)	0.64 (0.929)	0.11, 1.18	-1 – 2	0.0224	0.0449
Q5-Male (n=18)	4.6 (0.70)	0.28 (1.074)	-0.26, 0.81	-2 – 2	0.2878	0.3784
Q5-Female (n=14)	4.3 (0.61)	0.57 (0.938)	0.03, 1.11	-1 – 2	0.0401	0.0781
Q6-Male (n=18)	4.6 (1.10)	-0.17 (1.204)	-0.76, 0.43	-3 – 2	0.5636	0.6768
Q6-Female (n=14)	4.2 (0.80)	0.29 (0.914)	-0.24, 0.81	-1 – 2	0.2631	0.3984
Q8-Male (n=5)	4.4 (0.89)	0.25 (0.500)	-0.55, 1.05	0 – 1	0.3910	1.0000
Q8-Female (n=5)	3.4 (1.82)	0.40 (1.673)	-1.68, 2.48	-2 – 2	0.6213	1.0000
On Others' Need						
Q1-Male (n=18)	3.9 (1.51)	0.50 (1.724)	-0.36, 1.36	-2 – 4	0.2352	0.3250
Q1-Female (n=14)	4.7 (0.91)	-0.14 (1.167)	-0.82, 0.53	-3 – 1	0.6546	0.8281
Q2-Male (n=18)	4.3 (1.24)	0.11 (1.132)	-0.45, 0.67	-3 – 2	0.6823	0.6367
Q2-Female (n=14)	4.5 (0.85)	0.36 (1.447)	-0.47, 1.19	-3 – 2	0.3725	0.4727

Q3-Male (n=18)	3.6 (1.38)	0.94 (1.259)	0.32, 1.57	-2 – 3	0.0054	0.0105
Q3-Female (n=14)	4.1 (1.00)	0.14 (0.864)	-0.36, 0.64	-2 – 1	0.5470	0.7656
Q4-Male (n=18)	3.4 (1.04)	0 (1.283)	-0.64, 0.64	-2 – 3	1.0000	0.9795
Q4-Female (n=14)	3.4 (0.93)	0.07 (1.328)	-0.70, 0.84	-2 – 2	0.8436	0.9727
Q5-Male (n=18)	3.3 (1.64)	1.06 (1.662)	0.23, 1.88	-2 – 4	0.0153	0.0225
Q5-Female (n=14)	3.1 (1.17)	1.14 (1.460)	0.30, 1.99	-2 – 3	0.0117	0.0225
Q6-Male (n=18)	3.1 (1.60)	0.33 (1.645)	-0.48, 1.15	-2 – 4	0.4019	0.5129
Q6-Female (n=14)	2.4 (0.65)	1.21 (1.626)	0.28, 2.15	-2 – 3	0.0152	0.0234
Q7-Male (n=18)	3.3 (1.08)	0.50 (1.295)	-0.14, 1.14	-2 – 2	0.1197	0.1831
Q7-Female (n=14)	3.6 (1.09)	0.57 (1.342)	-0.20, 1.34	-3 – 3	0.1352	0.0977
Q8-Male (n=18)	3.1 (1.51)	0.94 (1.056)	0.42, 1.47	-2 – 3	0.0014	0.0037
Q8-Female (n=14)	3.2 (1.25)	1.00 (1.840)	-0.06, 2.06	-2 – 5	0.0629	0.0898
On Stories Sharing						
Q1-Male (n=18)	3.5 (1.50)	0.67 (1.328)	0.01, 1.33	-1 – 3	0.0482	0.0508
Q1-Female (n=14)	3.9 (1.41)	0.36 (1.692)	-0.62, 1.33	-2 – 4	0.4438	0.5117
Q2-Male (n=18)	4.5 (1.47)	0.28 (1.364)	-0.40, 0.96	-1 – 3	0.3995	0.5085
Q2-Female (n=14)	4.5 (1.02)	0.07 (1.141)	-0.59, 0.73	-2 – 2	0.8185	0.8828
Q3-Male (n=18)	4.2 (1.58)	0 (1.940)	-0.96, 0.96	-5 – 3	1.0000	0.8447



Q3-Female (n=14)	4.4 (0.74)	0.21 (1.122)	-0.43, 0.86	-2 – 2	0.4874	0.6172
Q4-Male (n=18)	5.0 (1.08)	0.28 (1.127)	-0.28, 0.84	-1 – 3	0.3105	0.4253
Q4-Female (n=14)	4.4 (1.28)	0.57 (1.284)	-0.17, 1.31	-1 – 4	0.1197	0.1797
Q5-Male (n=18)	4.1 (1.53)	0.83 (1.150)	0.26, 1.41	-1 – 3	0.0069	0.0117
Q5-Female (n=14)	3.9 (1.41)	0.57 (1.452)	-0.27, 1.41	-1 – 3	0.1648	0.1660
Q6-Male (n=18)	3.7 (1.56)	0.06 (1.349)	-0.62, 0.73	-4 – 2	0.8634	0.6563
Q6-Female (n=14)	3.5 (1.16)	-0.07 (1.900)	-1.17, 1.03	-5 – 2	0.8903	1.0000
<p><i>Source: Results from Called to B.L.E.S.S. Questionnaire</i></p> <p><i>Six-item scale: 1=Strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=Somewhat disagree, 4=Somewhat agree, 5=Agree, and 6=Strongly agree.</i></p> <p><i>Min=minimum, Max=maximum</i></p>						

Table 5 Summary of Mean Score Change (Post-Score minus Pre-Score) on Questions in Called to B.L.E.S.S. Questionnaire (By Years of Accepting Christ)

	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]
	Pre-Score (SD)	Mean score change (post-minus pre-) (SD)	95% CI for the mean score change	Min-Max Change	p-value (Paired t-test)	p-value (Wilcoxon signed-rank test)
On Worship						
Q1- ≥10 yrs (n=22)	4.6 (1.14)	0.32 (0.894)	-0.08, 0.71	-2 – 2	0.1098	0.1719
Q1- <10 yrs (n=10)	4.1 (1.79)	0.80 (1.476)	-0.26, 1.86	-1 – 4	0.1206	0.1875
Q2-≥10 yrs (n=22)	4.9 (1.19)	0.05 (1.618)	-0.67, 0.76	-5 – 3	0.8964	0.7559
Q2-<10 yrs (n=10)	4.4 (1.43)	0.60 (0.843)	-0.00, 1.20	-1 – 2	0.0510	0.1250
Q3-≥10 yrs (n=22)	4.5 (1.08)	-0.30 (0.483)	-0.65, 0.05	-1 – 0	0.0811	0.2500
Q3-<10 yrs (n=10)	4.4 (0.84)	0 (0.816)	-0.58, 0.58	-2 – 1	1.0000	1.0000
Q4-≥10 yrs (n=22)	3.5 (1.30)	0.95 (1.133)	0.45, 1.46	-1 – 4	0.0007	0.0007
Q4-<10 yrs (n=10)	4.1 (1.37)	0.20 (0.919)	-0.46, 0.86	-1 – 2	0.5086	0.7500
Q5-≥10 yrs (n=22)	4.0 (1.36)	0.59 (1.054)	0.12, 1.06	-1 – 3	0.0156	0.0220
Q5-<10 yrs (n=10)	4.6 (0.84)	-0.50 (1.509)	-1.58, 0.58	-4 – 1	0.3221	0.5000
Q6-≥10 yrs (n=22)	4.4 (1.22)	-0.05 (1.174)	-0.57, 0.48	-3 – 2	0.8577	1.0000
Q6-<10 yrs (n=10)	4.2 (0.63)	-0.20 (1.549)	-1.31, 0.91	-3 – 1	0.6926	0.8125
On Prayer						
Q1-≥10 yrs (n=22)	5.3 (0.83)	-0.40 (0.854)	-0.79, -0.03	-2 – 1	0.0355	0.0566

Q1-<10 yrs (n=10)	5.1 (0.88)	-0.20 (1.317)	-1.14, 0.74	-3 – 2	0.6424	0.8125
Q2-≥10 yrs (n=22)	4.1 (1.23)	0.36 (1.136)	-0.14, 0.87	-2 – 3	0.1481	0.1973
Q2-<10 yrs (n=10)	4.6 (0.97)	-0.10 (1.912)	-1.47, 1.27	-3 – 3	0.8723	0.9063
Q3-≥10 yrs (n=22)	4.9 (0.89)	0.09 (0.921)	-0.32, 0.50	-2 – 1	0.6482	0.8184
Q3-<10 yrs (n=10)	4.8 (1.23)	0.10 (0.876)	-0.53, 0.73	-1 – 1	0.7263	1.0000
Q4-≥10 yrs (n=22)	4.4 (1.22)	0.23 (1.445)	-0.41, 0.87	-3 – 4	0.4689	0.4957
Q4-<10 yrs (n=10)	3.8 (1.03)	0.60 (1.265)	-0.30, 1.50	-1 – 3	0.1679	0.2656
Q5-≥10 yrs (n=22)	4.4 (0.59)	0.45 (0.963)	0.03, 0.88	-2 – 2	0.0379	0.0630
Q5-<10 yrs (n=10)	4.5 (0.85)	0.30 (1.160)	-0.53, 1.13	-1 – 2	0.4344	0.4375
Q6-≥10 yrs (n=22)	4.3 (1.04)	0.14 (1.037)	-0.32, 0.60	-2 – 2	0.5441	0.6213
Q6-<10 yrs (n=10)	4.6 (0.84)	-0.20 (1.229)	-1.08, 0.68	-3 – 1	0.6193	1.0000
Q8-≥10 yrs (n=8)	4.0 (1.60)	0.25 (1.282)	-0.82, 1.32	-2 – 2	0.5983	1.0000
Q8-<10 yrs (n=2)	3.5 (0.71)	1.0 (NA, n=1)	NA	1 – 1	NA	NA
On Others' Need						
Q1-≥10 yrs (n=22)	4.5 (1.26)	0.05 (1.463)	-0.60, 0.69	-3 – 3	0.8855	1.0000
Q1-<10 yrs (n=10)	3.8 (1.40)	0.60 (1.647)	-0.58, 1.78	-2 – 4	0.2789	0.4063
Q2-≥10 yrs (n=22)	4.6 (0.95)	0.09 (1.342)	-0.50, 0.69	-3 – 2	0.7538	0.6711
Q2-<10 yrs (n=10)	3.9 (1.20)	0.50 (1.080)	-0.27, 1.27	-1 – 2	0.1773	0.2500

Q3-≥10 yrs (n=22)	3.6 (1.26)	0.95 (1.090)	0.47, 1.44	-2 – 3	0.0005	0.0011
Q3-<10 yrs (n=10)	4.1 (1.20)	-0.2 (0.919)	-0.86, 0.46	-2 – 1	0.5086	0.7500
Q4-≥10 yrs (n=22)	3.4 (1.05)	-0.09 (1.151)	-0.60, 0.42	-2 – 2	0.7147	0.6807
Q4-<10 yrs (n=10)	3.4 (0.84)	0.30 (1.567)	-0.82, 1.42	-2 – 3	0.5599	0.5313
Q5-≥10 yrs (n=22)	3.3 (1.35)	1.05 (1.731)	0.28, 1.81	-2 – 4	0.0100	0.0156
Q5-<10 yrs (n=10)	3.2 (1.69)	1.20 (1.135)	0.39, 2.01	0 – 3	0.0086	0.0313
Q6-≥10 yrs (n=22)	2.8 (1.19)	0.68 (1.756)	-0.10, 1.46	-2 – 4	0.0829	0.0982
Q6-<10 yrs (n=10)	2.9 (1.60)	0.80 (1.549)	-0.31, 1.91	-2 – 3	0.1369	0.1875
Q7-≥10 yrs (n=22)	3.6 (1.14)	0.50 (1.371)	-0.11, 1.11	-3 – 3	0.1020	0.1112
Q7-<10 yrs (n=10)	3.0 (0.82)	0.60 (1.174)	-0.24, 1.44	-2 – 2	0.1405	0.2188
Q8-≥10 yrs (n=22)	3.1 (1.34)	0.95 (1.174)	0.43, 1.48	-2 – 4	0.0010	0.0016
Q8-<10 yrs (n=10)	3.2 (1.55)	1.0 (1.943)	-0.39, 2.39	-2 – 5	0.1382	0.1992
On Stories Sharing						
Q1-≥10 yrs (n=22)	3.7 (1.39)	0.73 (1.518)	0.05, 1.40	-2 – 4	0.0355	0.0334
Q1-<10 yrs (n=10)	3.6 (1.65)	0.10 (1.370)	-0.88, 1.08	-2 – 3	0.8227	1.0000
Q2-≥10 yrs (n=22)	4.4 (1.29)	0.41 (1.333)	-0.18, 1.00	-2 – 3	0.1648	0.1729
Q2-<10 yrs (n=10)	4.8 (1.23)	-0.30 (0.949)	-0.98, 0.38	-1 – 1	0.3434	0.5078
Q3-≥10 yrs (n=22)	4.1 (1.29)	0.41 (1.501)	-0.26, 1.07	-2 – 3	0.2151	0.2232

Q3-<10 yrs (n=10)	4.7 (1.16)	-0.60 (1.713)	-1.83, 0.63	-5 – 1	0.2967	0.5313
Q4-≥10 yrs (n=22)	4.8 (1.07)	0.36 (1.002)	-0.08, 0.81	-1 – 3	0.1035	0.1565
Q4-<10 yrs (n=10)	4.6 (1.51)	0.50 (1.581)	-0.63, 1.63	-1 – 4	0.3434	0.5156
Q5-≥10 yrs (n=22)	3.9 (1.49)	0.77 (1.193)	0.24, 1.30	-1 – 3	0.0062	0.0083
Q5-<10 yrs (n=10)	4.3 (1.42)	0.60 (1.506)	-0.48, 1.68	-1 – 3	0.2393	0.3125
Q6-≥10 yrs (n=22)	3.8 (1.33)	0.05 (1.676)	-0.70, 0.79	-5 – 2	0.9000	0.7898
Q6-<10 yrs (n=10)	3.2 (1.48)	-0.10 (1.449)	-1.14, 0.94	-4 – 1	0.8321	1.0000
<i>sSource: Results from Called to B.L.E.S.S. Questionnaire</i> <i>Six-item scale: 1=Strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=Somewhat disagree, 4=Somewhat agree, 5=Agree, and 6=Strongly agree.</i> <i>Min=minimum, Max=maximum</i>						

Table 6 Categorical Analysis of Score Change (Post-Score minus Pre-Score) on Questions in Called to B.L.E.S.S. Questionnaire

	Better	No Change	Worse
On Worship			
Q1 (n=32)	12 (37.5%)	17 (53.1%)	3 (9.4%)
Q2 (n=32)	11 (34.4%)	17 (53.1%)	4 (12.5%)
Q3 (n=32)	13 (40.6%)	10 (31.3%)	9 (28.1%)
Q4 (n=32)	17 (53.3%)	12 (37.5%)	3 (9.4%)
Q5 (n=32)	13 (40.6%)	13 (40.6%)	6 (18.8%)
Q6 (n=32)	11 (34.4%)	11 (34.4%)	10 (31.3%)
On Prayer			
Q1 (n=32)	4 (12.5%)	17 (53.1%)	11 (34.4%)
Q2 (n=32)	10 (31.3%)	16 (50.0%)	6 (18.8%)
Q3 (n=32)	12 (37.5%)	13 (40.6%)	7 (21.9%)
Q4 (n=32)	15 (46.9%)	9 (28.1%)	8 (25.0%)
Q5 (n=32)	14 (43.8%)	13 (40.6%)	5 (15.6%)
Q6 (n=32)	11 (34.4%)	12 (37.5%)	9 (28.1%)
Q8 (n=32)	3 (9.4%)	5 (15.6%)	24 (75.0%)
On Others' Need			
Q1 (n=32)	13 (40.6%)	10 (31.3%)	9 (28.1%)
Q2 (n=32)	14 (43.8%)	12 (37.5%)	6 (18.8%)
Q3 (n=32)	18 (56.3%)	10 (31.3%)	4 (12.5%)
Q4 (n=32)	11 (34.4%)	10 (31.3%)	11 (34.4%)
Q5 (n=32)	20 (62.5%)	8 (25.0%)	4 (12.5%)
Q6 (n=32)	16 (50.0%)	8 (25.0%)	8 (25.0%)
Q7 (n=32)	17 (53.1%)	11 (34.4%)	4 (12.5%)
Q8 (n=32)	22 (68.8%)	7 (21.9%)	3 (9.4%)
On Stories Sharing			
Q1 (n=32)	14 (43.8%)	10 (31.3%)	8 (25.0%)
Q2 (n=32)	11 (34.4%)	10 (31.3%)	11 (34.4%)
Q3 (n=32)	12 (37.5%)	9 (28.1%)	11 (34.4%)
Q4 (n=32)	13 (40.6%)	12 (37.5%)	7 (21.9%)
Q5 (n=32)	15 (46.9%)	12 (37.5%)	5 (15.6%)
Q6 (n=32)	12 (37.5%)	14 (43.8%)	6 (18.8%)
Source: Results from Called to B.L.E.S.S. Questionnaire			
Better: Post-score minus Pre-score > 0. No change: Post-score minus Pre-score = 0.			
Worse: Post-score minus Pre-score < 0.			

Table 7 Categorical Analysis of Score Change (Post-Score minus Pre-Score) on Questions in Called to B.L.E.S.S. Questionnaire (By Gender)

	Better	No Change	Worse
On Worship			
Q1-Male (n=18)	7 (38.9%)	9 (50.0%)	2 (11.1%)
Q1-Female (n=14)	5 (35.7%)	8 (57.1%)	1 (7.1%)
Q2-Male (n=18)	5 (27.8%)	10 (55.6%)	3 (16.7%)
Q2-Female (n=14)	6 (42.9%)	7 (50.0%)	1 (7.1%)
Q3-Male (n=18)	8 (44.4%)	5 (27.8%)	5 (27.8%)
Q3-Female (n=14)	5 (35.7%)	5 (35.7%)	4 (28.6%)
Q4-Male (n=18)	8 (44.4%)	8 (44.4%)	2 (11.1%)
Q4-Female (n=14)	9 (64.3%)	4 (28.6%)	1 (7.1%)
Q5-Male (n=18)	6 (33.3%)	8 (44.4%)	4 (22.2%)
Q5-Female (n=14)	7 (50.0%)	5 (35.7%)	2 (14.3%)
Q6-Male (n=18)	5 (27.8%)	6 (33.3%)	7 (38.9%)
Q6-Female (n=14)	6 (42.9%)	5 (35.7%)	3 (21.4%)
On Prayer			
Q1-Male (n=18)	3 (16.7%)	9 (50.0%)	6 (33.3%)
Q1-Female (n=14)	1 (7.1%)	8 (57.1%)	5 (35.7%)
Q2-Male (n=18)	5 (27.8%)	9 (50.0%)	4 (22.2%)
Q2-Female (n=14)	5 (35.7%)	7 (50.0%)	2 (14.3%)
Q3-Male (n=18)	8 (44.4%)	6 (33.3%)	4 (22.2%)
Q3-Female (n=14)	4 (28.6%)	7 (50.0%)	3 (21.4%)
Q4-Male (n=18)	6 (33.3%)	6 (33.3%)	6 (33.3%)
Q4-Female (n=14)	9 (64.3%)	3 (21.4%)	2 (14.3%)
Q5-Male (n=18)	8 (44.4%)	6 (33.3%)	4 (22.2%)
Q5-Female (n=14)	6 (42.9%)	7 (50.0%)	1 (7.1%)
Q6-Male (n=18)	5 (27.8%)	7 (38.9%)	6 (33.3%)
Q6-Female (n=14)	6 (42.9%)	5 (35.7%)	3 (21.4%)

Q8-Male (n=18)	1 (5.6%)	3 (16.7%)	14 (77.8%)
Q8-Female (n=14)	2 (14.3%)	2 (14.3%)	10 (71.4%)
On Others' Need			
Q1-Male (n=18)	9 (50.0%)	3 (16.7%)	6 (33.3%)
Q1-Female (n=14)	4 (28.6%)	7 (50.0%)	3 (21.4%)
Q2-Male (n=18)	7 (38.9%)	7 (38.9%)	4 (22.2%)
Q2-Female (n=14)	7 (50.0%)	5 (35.7%)	2 (14.3%)
Q3-Male (n=18)	13 (72.2%)	3 (16.7%)	2 (11.1%)
Q3-Female (n=14)	5 (35.7%)	7 (50.0%)	2 (14.3%)
Q4-Male (n=18)	5 (27.8%)	7 (38.9%)	6 (33.3%)
Q4-Female (n=14)	6 (42.9%)	3 (21.4%)	5 (35.7%)
Q5-Male (n=18)	10 (55.6%)	6 (33.3%)	2 (11.1%)
Q5-Female (n=14)	10 (71.4%)	2 (14.3%)	2 (14.3%)
Q6-Male (n=18)	7 (38.9%)	5 (27.8%)	6 (33.3%)
Q6-Female (n=14)	9 (64.3%)	3 (21.4%)	2 (14.3%)
Q7-Male (n=18)	9 (50.0%)	6 (33.3%)	3 (16.7%)
Q7-Female (n=14)	8 (57.1%)	5 (35.7%)	1 (7.1%)
Q8-Male (n=18)	14 (77.8%)	3 (16.7%)	1 (5.6%)
Q8-Female (n=14)	8 (57.1%)	4 (28.6%)	2 (14.3%)
On Stories Sharing			
Q1-Male (n=18)	9 (50.0%)	5 (27.8%)	4 (22.2%)
Q1-Female (n=14)	5 (35.7%)	5 (35.7%)	4 (28.6%)
Q2-Male (n=18)	7 (38.9%)	4 (22.2%)	7 (38.9%)
Q2-Female (n=14)	4 (28.6%)	6 (42.9%)	4 (28.6%)
Q3-Male (n=18)	7 (38.9%)	3 (16.7%)	8 (44.4%)
Q3-Female (n=14)	5 (35.7%)	6 (42.9%)	3 (21.4%)
Q4-Male (n=18)	7 (38.9%)	6 (33.3%)	5 (27.8%)
Q4-Female (n=14)	6 (42.9%)	6 (42.9%)	2 (14.3%)
Q5-Male (n=18)	9 (50.0%)	8 (44.4%)	1 (5.6%)



Q5-Female (n=14)	6 (42.9%)	4 (28.6%)	4 (28.6%)
Q6-Male (n=18)	7 (38.9%)	8 (44.4%)	3 (16.7%)
Q6-Female (n=14)	5 (35.7%)	6 (42.9%)	3 (21.4%)
<p><i>Source: Results from Called to B.L.E.S.S. Questionnaire</i></p> <p><i>Better: Post-score minus Pre-score &gt; 0. No change: Post-score minus Pre-score = 0.</i></p> <p><i>Worse: Post-score minus Pre-score &lt; 0.</i></p>			

Table 8 Categorical Analysis of Score Change (Post-Score minus Pre-Score) on Questions in Called to B.L.E.S.S. Questionnaire (By Years of Accepting Christ)

	Better	No Change	Worse
On Worship			
Q1- ≥10 yrs (n=22)	8 (36.4%)	12 (54.6%)	2 (9.1%)
Q1- <10 yrs (n=10)	4 (40.0%)	5 (50.0%)	1 (10.0%)
Q2-≥10 yrs (n=22)	7 (31.8%)	11 (50.0%)	4 (18.2%)
Q2-<10 yrs (n=10)	4 (40.0%)	6 (60.0%)	0
Q3-≥10 yrs (n=22)	13 (59.1%)	3 (13.6%)	6 (27.3%)
Q3-<10 yrs (n=10)	0	7 (70.0%)	3 (30.0%)
Q4-≥10 yrs (n=22)	14 (63.6%)	7 (31.8%)	1 (4.6%)
Q4-<10 yrs (n=10)	3 (30.0%)	5 (50.0%)	2 (20.0%)
Q5-≥10 yrs (n=22)	11 (50.0%)	8 (36.4%)	3 (13.6%)
Q5-<10 yrs (n=10)	2 (20.0%)	5 (50.0%)	3 (30.0%)
Q6-≥10 yrs (n=22)	7 (31.8%)	7 (31.8%)	8 (36.4%)
Q6-<10 yrs (n=10)	4 (40.0%)	4 (40.0%)	2 (20.0%)
On Prayer			
Q1- ≥10 yrs (n=22)	2 (9.1%)	12 (54.6%)	8 (36.4%)
Q1- <10 yrs (n=10)	2 (20.0%)	5 (50.0%)	3 (30.0%)
Q2-≥10 yrs (n=22)	7 (31.8%)	12 (54.6%)	3 (13.6%)
Q2-<10 yrs (n=10)	3 (30.0%)	4 (40.0%)	3 (30.0%)
Q3-≥10 yrs (n=22)	8 (36.4%)	10 (45.5%)	4 (18.2%)
Q3-<10 yrs (n=10)	4 (40.0%)	3 (30.0%)	3 (30.0%)
Q4-≥10 yrs (n=22)	10 (45.5%)	6 (27.3%)	6 (27.3%)
Q4-<10 yrs (n=10)	5 (50.0%)	3 (30.0%)	2 (20.0%)
Q5-≥10 yrs (n=22)	10 (45.5%)	10 (45.5%)	2 (9.1%)
Q5-<10 yrs (n=10)	4 (40.0%)	3 (30.0%)	3 (30.0%)
Q6-≥10 yrs (n=22)	8 (36.4%)	8 (36.4%)	6 (27.3%)
Q6-<10 yrs (n=10)	3 (30.0%)	4 (40.0%)	3 (30.0%)

Q8-≥10 yrs (n=22)	2 (9.1%)	5 (22.7%)	15 (68.2%)
Q8-<10 yrs (n=10)	1 (10.0%)	0	9 (90.0%)
On Others' Need			
Q1- ≥10 yrs (n=22)	8 (36.4%)	7 (31.8%)	7 (31.8%)
Q1- <10 yrs (n=10)	5 (50.0%)	3 (30.0%)	2 (20.0%)
Q2-≥10 yrs (n=22)	9 (40.9%)	9 (40.9%)	4 (18.2%)
Q2-<10 yrs (n=10)	5 (50.0%)	3 (30.0%)	2 (20.0%)
Q3-≥10 yrs (n=22)	16 (72.7%)	5 (22.7%)	1 (4.6%)
Q3-<10 yrs (n=10)	2 (20.0%)	5 (50.0%)	3 (30.0%)
Q4-≥10 yrs (n=22)	8 (36.4%)	6 (27.3%)	8 (36.4%)
Q4-<10 yrs (n=10)	3 (30.0%)	4 (40.0%)	3 (30.0%)
Q5-≥10 yrs (n=22)	14 (63.6%)	4 (18.2%)	4 (18.2%)
Q5-<10 yrs (n=10)	6 (60.0%)	4 (40.0%)	0
Q6-≥10 yrs (n=22)	10 (45.5%)	6 (27.3%)	6 (27.3%)
Q6-<10 yrs (n=10)	6 (60.0%)	2 (20.0%)	2 (20.0%)
Q7-≥10 yrs (n=22)	11 (50.0%)	8 (36.4%)	3 (13.6%)
Q7-<10 yrs (n=10)	6 (60.0%)	3 (30.0%)	1 (10.0%)
Q8-≥10 yrs (n=22)	15 (68.2%)	6 (27.3%)	1 (4.6%)
Q8-<10 yrs (n=10)	7 (70.0%)	1 (10.0%)	2 (20.0%)
On Stories Sharing			
Q1- ≥10 yrs (n=22)	11 (50.0%)	6 (27.3%)	5 (22.7%)
Q1- <10 yrs (n=10)	3 (30.0%)	4 (40.0%)	3 (30.0%)
Q2-≥10 yrs (n=22)	8 (36.4%)	9 (40.9%)	5 (22.7%)
Q2-<10 yrs (n=10)	3 (30.0%)	1 (10.0%)	6 (60.0%)
Q3-≥10 yrs (n=22)	10 (45.5%)	5 (22.7%)	7 (31.8%)
Q3-<10 yrs (n=10)	2 (20.0%)	4 (40.0%)	4 (40.0%)
Q4-≥10 yrs (n=22)	9 (40.9%)	9 (40.9%)	4 (18.2%)
Q4-<10 yrs (n=10)	4 (40.0%)	3 (30.0%)	3 (30.0%)

Q5-≥10 yrs (n=22)	12 (54.6%)	7 (31.8%)	3 (13.6%)
Q5-<10 yrs (n=10)	3 (30.0%)	5 (50.0%)	2 (20.0%)
Q6-≥10 yrs (n=22)	9 (40.9%)	8 (36.4%)	5 (22.7%)
Q6-<10 yrs (n=10)	3 (30.0%)	6 (60.0%)	1 (10.0%)
<p><i>Source: Results from Called to B.L.E.S.S. Questionnaire</i></p> <p><i>Better: Post-score minus Pre-score &gt; 0. No change: Post-score minus Pre-score = 0.</i></p> <p><i>Worse: Post-score minus Pre-score &lt; 0.</i></p>			

## APPENDIX L

### SUB-GROUP ANALYSIS ON SELECTED SURVEY QUESTIONS

#### On Worship

*#W4 (In the past two months, I felt being sent out to live missionally after partaking in the Holy Communion).*

#### Subgroup Analysis by Gender

Although the sample size was relatively small (18 males and 14 females), it was worthwhile to look for trends or signal in the data by gender. A subgroup analysis was performed to investigate the difference of scores in the 'On Worship' domain between male and female participants (Appendix K, Table 4). The mean baseline scores were similar for male participants ( $3.7 \pm 1.50$ ) and female participants ( $3.8 \pm 1.12$ ). The data indicated that the mean score difference was higher for female participants ( $0.93 \pm 1.072$ ) and lower for male participants ( $0.56 \pm 1.149$ ). Since the standard deviations of mean change score in the two gender groups were similar (1.149 for male vs. 1.072 for female), the data might suggest that female participants felt strongly being sent out to live missionally after partaking in the Holy Communion ( $P=0.0137$ , Wilcoxon signed-rank test) while the change for male participants was not statistically significant ( $P=0.0742$ , Wilcoxon signed-rank test) (Appendix K, Table 4).

The non-significant score change for male participants were contributed by the fact that 44.4% (8/18) of participants marked no change in score, and two participants (11.1%, 2/18) marked a worse change in score (post-score minus pre-score  $<0$ ) after the

CTB journey. The remaining 44.4% (8/18) of participants indicated a better change in score (post-score minus pre-score >0) (Appendix K, Table 4).

#### Subgroup Analysis by Years of Accepting Christ

In the subgroup analysis by years of accepting Christ, the mean baseline score (pre-score) was  $3.5 \pm 1.30$  with a bigger mean score change of  $0.95 \pm 1.133$ , which was statistically significant ( $P=0.0007$ , Wilcoxon signed-rank test). On the other hand, participants who accepted Christ for less than 10 years had a mean baseline score of  $4.1 \pm 1.37$  with a smaller change in score of  $0.20 \pm 0.919$ , which were not statistically significant ( $P=0.7500$ , Wilcoxon signed-rank test)(Appendix K, Table 5). The non-significance in <10 years group was due to the fact that 50% (5/10) marked no change in post-score (Appendix K, Table 5).

The CTB learning journey was a good reminder and encouragement to all participants, especially those who accepted Christ for more than 10 years to feel strongly being sent out to live missionally after partaking in the Holy Communion.

### On Others' Need

*#N8 (In the past two months, my small group has intentionally connected people who did not know Christ to our small group gatherings).*

#### Subgroup Analysis by Gender

Male and female participants had similar mean baseline scores ( $3.1 \pm 1.51$  for male and  $3.2 \pm 1.25$  for female) but the mean score change was slightly higher in female participants with higher standard deviation ( $1.00 \pm 1.840$  vs.  $0.94 \pm 1.056$  in male participants). The data suggests both male and female participants were motivated to connecting people who did not know Christ to the small group gatherings; however, the change in score was statistically significant in male participants ( $P=0.0037$ , Wilcoxon signed-rank test). Although the score change for female participants was not statistically significant ( $P=0.0898$ , Wilcoxon signed-rank test), 57.1% (8/14) exhibited a better score change after the CTB journey (Appendix K, Table 4).

#### Subgroup Analysis by Years of Accepting Christ

Participants who accepted Christ for  $\geq 10$  years and  $< 10$  years had similar mean baseline scores of  $3.1 \pm 1.34$  and  $3.2 \pm 1.55$  respectively but there was a statistically significant increase in mean change score for  $\geq 10$  years ( $0.95 \pm 1.174$ ) ( $P=0.0016$ , Wilcoxon signed-rank test). On the other hand, participants who accepted Christ for  $< 10$  years had a mean score increase of  $1.0 \pm 1.943$ ; however, with a very high standard deviation in the data, the change in score was not statistically significant ( $P=0.1992$ , Wilcoxon signed-rank test).

In general, the data reflected that small group was an effective community in connecting people who did not know Christ to the small group gatherings, regardless of years of being a Christian.

*#N6 (In the past two months, I have intentionally eaten with new people (with whom I did not usually eat) for the sake of discussing the Christian faith).*

#### Subgroup Analysis by Gender

In the subgroup analysis, female participants had a lower mean baseline score than male participants ( $2.4 \pm 0.65$  in female and  $3.1 \pm 1.60$  in male) but the mean score differences were a lot higher for female participants ( $1.21 \pm 1.626$  vs.  $0.33 \pm 1.645$  in male participants). The mean score change for female participants was statistically significant ( $P=0.0234$ , Wilcoxon signed-rank test). On the other hand, the score change for male participants was not statistically significant ( $P=0.5129$ , Wilcoxon signed-rank test). In Appendix K, Table 4, only 38.9% (9/14) of male participants exhibited an increase in score change while 64.3% of female participants exhibited an increase, indicating they had intentionally eaten with new people (with whom I did not usually eat) for the sake of discussing the Christian faith.

*#N3 (In the past two months, I have felt compelled to intentionally build a personal relationship with someone who does not know Jesus Christ as his or her personal savior).*

#### Subgroup Analysis by Gender

Male participants had a mean baseline score of  $3.6 \pm 1.38$  with a substantial mean score change of  $0.94 \pm 1.259$ , which was statistically significant ( $P=0.0105$ ,



Wilcoxon signed-rank test). Female participants, however, had a higher mean baseline of  $4.1 \pm 1.00$  but there was little change in mean score from baseline ( $0.14 \pm 0.864$ ), which was not statistically significant ( $P=0.7656$ , Wilcoxon signed-rank test). The little change in mean score could well be explained by the fact that only 35.7% (5/14) of female participants had better score change than baseline but 72.2% (13/18) of male participants exhibited a better change. The data suggests that male participants felt more compelled to intentionally build a personal relationship with someone who does not know Jesus Christ as his or her personal savior.

#### Subgroup Analysis by Years of Accepting Christ

Participants who accepted Christ for  $\geq 10$  years had mean baseline score of  $3.6 \pm 1.26$  and there was a statistically significant increase in mean change score of  $0.95 \pm 1.090$  ( $P=0.0011$ , Wilcoxon signed-rank test). On the other hand, participants who accepted Christ for  $< 10$  years had mean baseline score of  $4.1 \pm 1.20$  but with a decrease change from baseline of  $0.2 \pm 0.919$ . In general, the impact of CTB learning journey was positive to ignite the passion of participants who accepted Christ for  $\geq 10$  years again to intentionally build a personal relationship with someone who does not know Jesus Christ as his or her personal savior, while participants in  $< 10$  years group might not feel strongly compelled to do so in the past 2 months.

## On Stories Sharing

*#S5 (In the past two months, I felt that I knew what God has done in the lives of my small group members).*

### Subgroup Analysis by Gender

The mean baseline score for male participants was  $4.1 \pm 1.53$  with a mean score change of  $0.83 \pm 1.150$ , which showed statistically significant ( $P=0.0117$ , Wilcoxon signed-rank test). The mean baseline score for female participants was  $3.9 \pm 1.41$  with a mean score change of  $0.57 \pm 1.452$ , which was not statistically significant ( $P=0.1660$ , Wilcoxon signed-rank test).

### Subgroup Analysis by Years of Accepting Christ

The mean baseline scores were higher for participants who accepted Christ for less than 10 years ( $4.3 \pm 1.42$ ) than those who accepted Christ for more than 10 years ( $3.9 \pm 1.49$ ). The mean score change was just slightly higher in the  $\geq 10$  years group ( $0.77 \pm 1.193$ ) than the  $< 10$  years group ( $0.60 \pm 1.506$ ). However, the change in score for  $\geq 10$  years group was statistically significant ( $P=0.0083$ , Wilcoxon signed-rank test).

*#S1 (In the past two months, I felt that I could easily tell people my life story in a precise and concise way).*

#### Subgroup Analysis by Years of Accepting Christ

The mean baseline scores were similar for participants who accepted Christ for more than 10 years ( $3.7 \pm 1.39$ ) and less than 10 years ( $3.6 \pm 1.65$ ). The mean score change was a lot higher in the  $\geq 10$  years group ( $0.73 \pm 1.518$ ) than the  $< 10$  years group ( $0.10 \pm 1.370$ ). However, the change in score for  $\geq 10$  years group was statistically significant ( $P=0.0334$ , Wilcoxon signed-rank test). The data showed that participants who accepted Christ for more than 10 years might find the CTB learning journey refreshing and thus encouraged them to construct their life story in a precise and concise way.

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